

The New Amberola GRAPHIC

PUBLISHED BY THE NEW AMBEROLA PHONOGRAPH CO.

Deadline for
Next Issue:
October 10th

→ See Dated
Auctions in
This Issue!

July, 1993
Summer Issue
(Mailed mid-August)

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July, 1993
(Summer)

The New Amberola Graphic

Issue No. 85
(Vol. XXII, No. 1)

Published by
The New Amberola Phonograph Co.
37 Caledonia Street
St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

Editor: Martin F. Bryan

Printed in U.S.A.

Subscription Rate: \$8.00 for eight issues (two years) (\$10.00 foreign)

*Advertising Rates: Display: \$5.50 per box - see below Quarter page: \$10.00
Half page: \$18.50 (8" x 5 1/4" original or 10 1/2 x 7 1/2 to be reduced)
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scriptions
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Display boxes measure 3 1/2" wide by 5" long before reduction. We will type your ad, or you may prepare it yourself. Simple illustrations may also be included. Be sure all ad copy to be reproduced is in black ink, sharp and clear. Border must not exceed 3 1/2 x 5 for single boxes. Two or more boxes, vertically or horizontally (i.e., 3 1/2 x 10 or 7 x 5), multiplied by the one box rate.

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43 through 73, each..... .75
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THE NEW AMBEROLA GRAPHIC
(ISSN 0028-4181)

Second class postage paid at St. Johnsbury, VT Post Office 05819. Published 4 times a year (January, April, July and October) by the New Amberola Phonograph Company, 37 Caledonia St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819.

Postmaster: Send address changes to:
The New Amberola Graphic, 37 Caledonia St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819.

Subscription Rate:

2 Years (8 issues).....\$8.00

About Advertising

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Attention

FLOOD VICTIMS

If you are a victim of the recent flooding in the midwest and it's time to renew your subscription, please let us know. We'll continue to send you the Graphic, and you can pay us at a later date. You undoubtedly have enough turmoil these days without worrying about additional expenses.

3
(doin'
better!)

readers did not receive the last issue because they failed to notify us of a change in their address.

Don't let this happen to you! Let us know when you move (second class mail does not get forwarded automatically).

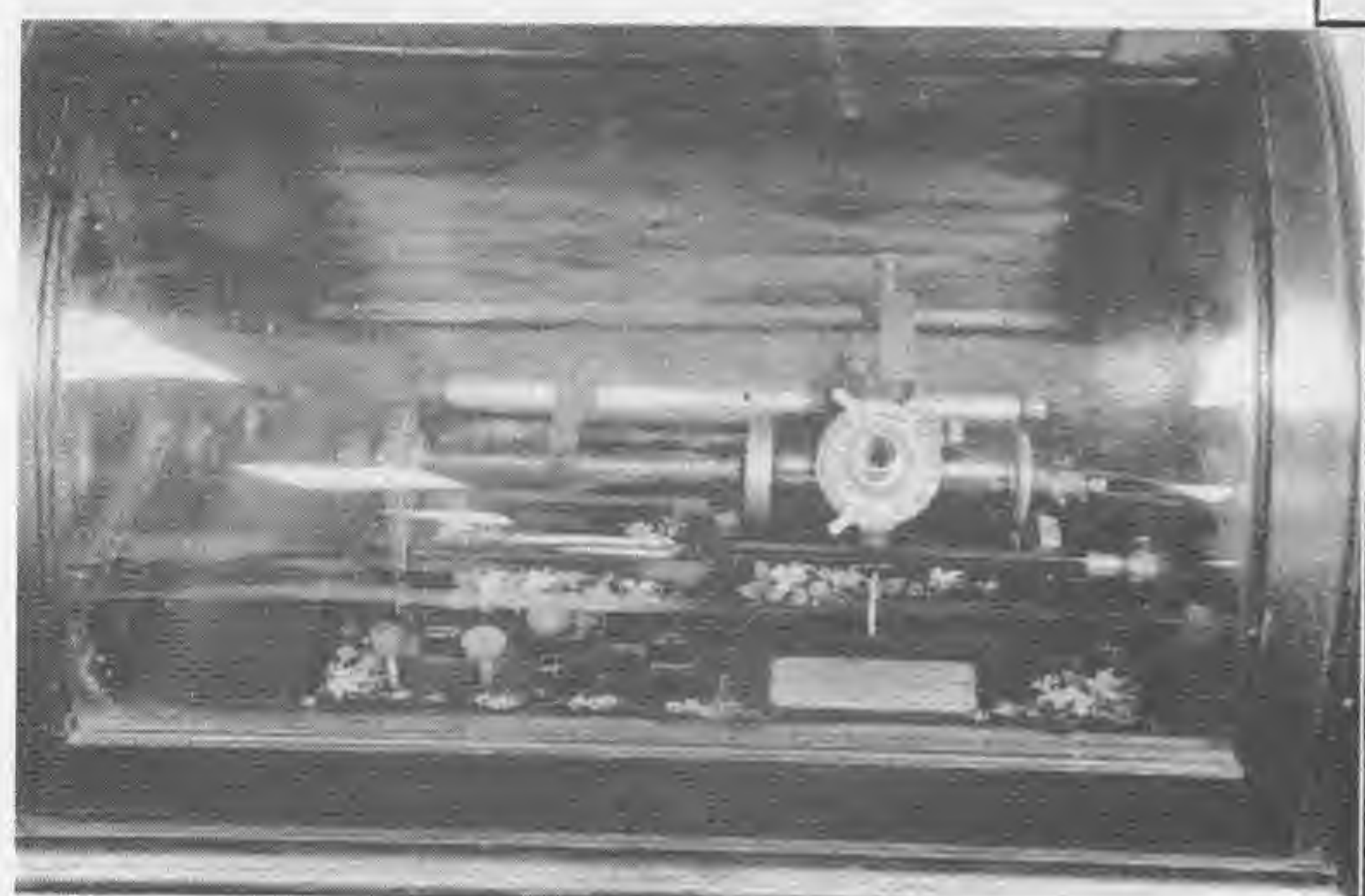
PHONOGRAPH FORUM

by George Paul

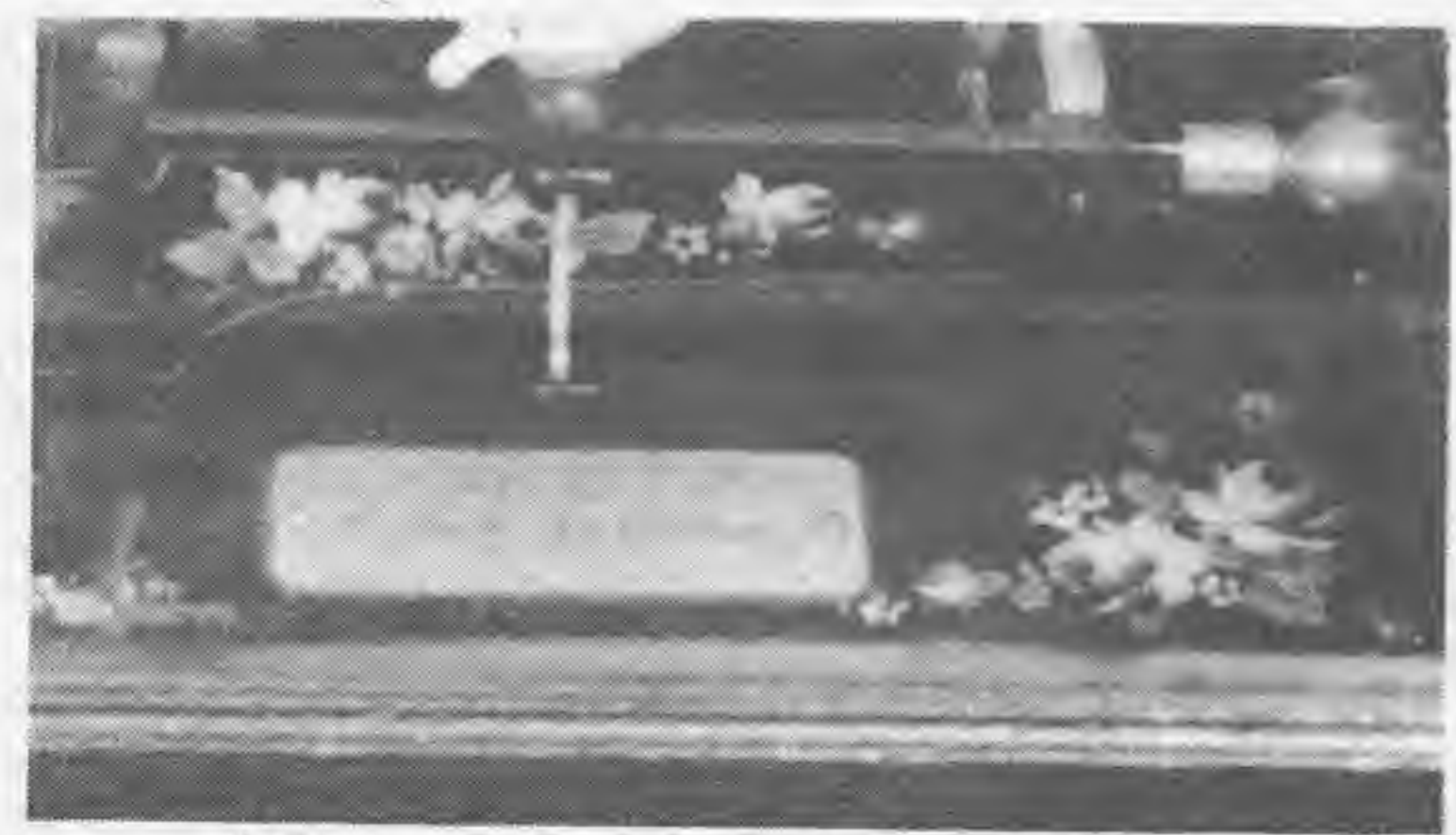
A GLIMPSE OF FT. MYERS

As many of you are aware, the Edison Winter Home in Ft. Myers, Florida is the site of a significant collection of Edison Phonographs. Despite the all-too-typical mislabeling of machines, mismatched horns, and incorrect equipment (eg: an early Class M phono mechanism with a Model C reproducer mounted upside down!), the Ft. Myers museum is well worth the visit.

Among the several rarities at Ft. Myers are two pictured here:



1) I have often wondered what comprised the "Specially Decorated" option cited in the Edison catalogs. I believe that this Edison Spring Motor Phonograph may be an example. The usual corner decorations are absent although the pinstripes are conventional. The floral motif appears silkscreened and is very well done. The colors range from rich green in the leaves to ruby red in the petals. The machine is in a glass-topped cabinet, which has undoubtedly helped preserve the decoration.



(close-up of some of the decoration)

2) This magnificent example is an illustrated song machine called a "Stereophone." In this instance, a stereoptican-type viewer with automatically changing pictures is coupled with a Type B Graphophone to produce the musical accompaniment. The instruction cards

on the cabinet read as follows:

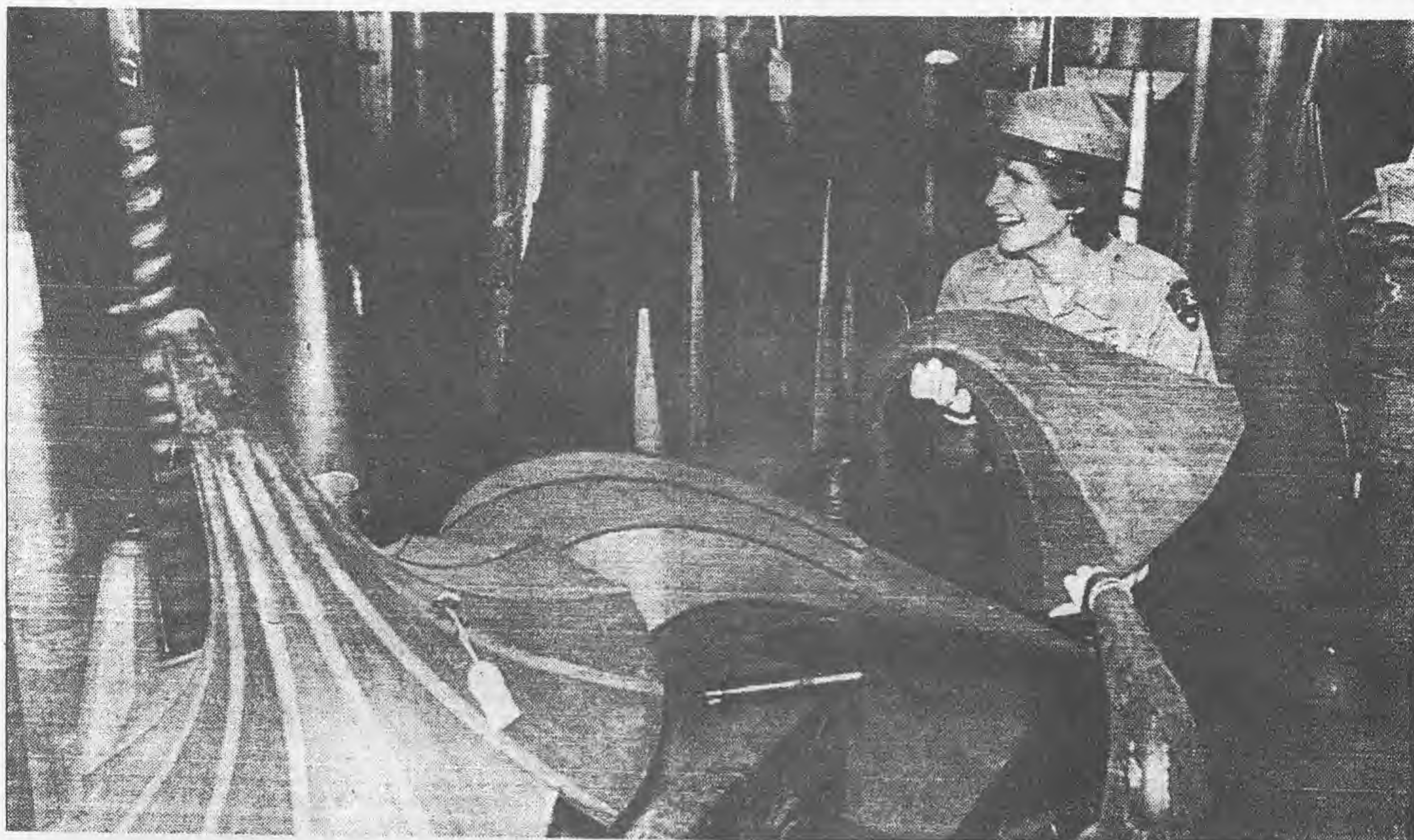
- (Left): "This machine is the property of the National Cosmorama Co., New Haven, Conn. and is leased, not sold. Press the button and see first scene free."
- (Right): "Directions: Drop nickel in slot and wind crank until bell rings, then let go. Put tubes to ears. Press the button and see first scene free."
- (Bottom): "The Stereophone! Drop a Nickel and Hear the Song and See the Illustrations! Frequent Changes. National Cosmorama Co., New Haven, Conn."



It may not be apparent in the photograph, but the Type B Graphophone is mounted backward in the cabinet. Did you ever see a machine that reached out and grabbed you by your tonsils? This one took mine out, and I didn't even have any! If you ever visit Ft. Myers, you'll see what I mean. If this one doesn't get you, something else will!

George Paul can be contacted at: 126 South Main St., Mt. Morris, NY 14510.

Decay Threatens Discoveries at Edison's 'Invention Factory'



Kim Garnick/The New York Times

Phonograph horns are among the documents and items at the Thomas Edison Invention Laboratories in West Orange, N.J., believed to be worth millions of dollars. The compound is now run by the National Parks Service. Karen Sloat-Olsen, a park ranger, examined one of the horns.

WEST ORANGE, N.J. — On the upper floors of the Thomas Edison Invention Laboratories, beyond the places tourists go, phonograph records sit in musty darkness, dusty and warping as the seasons change.

The records, along with sketches, documents and stacked crates of the unknown, are believed to be worth millions of dollars. Their neglect over the last 60 years has thrust the entire site onto a national foundation's list of "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places."

The National Trust for Historic Places, whose watch list includes the entire state of Vermont, issued its warning largely because the laboratory, known to historians as "the invention factory," has an estimated 390,000 papers and objects that are uncatalogued and deteriorating. Most have remained as they were stowed 62 years ago, when Thomas Alva Edison died and the laboratory shut its doors.

His Greatest Invention

Of all the displays here, the West Orange compound itself, built in 1887 and now run by the National Parks Service, may have been the inventor's greatest creation, historians say.

"People have called Edison's greatest invention the invention factory, and in many respects that's true," said Paul Israel, a history professor at Rutgers University and associate editor of the Edison Papers

Project. The project, working here and in New Brunswick, is sorting through the inventor's prolific legacy, including little-studied lawsuits over industrial pollution and clues to his dealings as a businessman.

It is possible that something of great significance lurks in the laboratory. This spring, seven frames of motion-picture film were found in the office of Theodore Edison, the inventor's son, who died last November. Archivists say the frames, of a man exercising, predate movies made in Mr. Edison's "Black Maria" studio, which was built at the site 100 years ago and was where Edison was believed to have made his earliest films.

Cultural Discoveries

It is less likely that scientific discoveries will be made in the laboratory's archives, museum officials say. The findings are often cultural or personal.

Museum technicians have discovered, for example, that Edison regularly invited several favorite musicians to make recordings, acting as a sort of talent scout and agent as well as inventor and scientist.

"Which is sort of unfortunate, because he was deaf," said one technician, Anne Markham, who recently finished cleaning dozens of boxes of original phonograph records.

The lab compound and adjacent factories changed the face of then-rural New Jersey even as they changed how inventions were made.

Though others had thought of the light bulb, only Mr. Edison had the conglomeration of machinists, scientists and materials necessary to make one and to develop the electric generating system it required.

Ensuing decades have made dinosaurs of Mr. Edison's early work, from the phonograph to the first alkaline battery. But the remains attract a steadily growing number of visitors, including 74,000 last year, many of whom are old enough to remember how the work here changed their lives — and even some who had similar effects in their own attics.

"He still resonates in our culture as representing American technological achievement, American know-how," said Dr. Israel. "He understood the relationship of invention to marketplace, and that is still important."

The laboratory is a carefully groomed 1931, the year Mr. Edison died. Restored phonographs are played on tours, and shops and labs are arranged to appear as if their inhabitants had just been called away from experiments.

But behind the scenes, museum officials say, what is needed is modernization: a computer, an air-conditioner, a fire prevention system and preservative chemicals to erase years of degradation.

In some cases, they say, simple folders to preserve papers would be an improvement.

The site's director, Maryanne Ger-

bauckas, said that an insurance survey put the value of the entire contents of the Edison lab at \$1 billion. A simple Edison signature can be worth \$3,500, and the lab has many, she said.

Museum officials want to construct a new building on the grounds to store the most valuable items, such as notes in Mr. Edison's handwriting.

But with a \$2 million budget from the National Parks Service, the site has never had the funds for such work. All told, officials say, a \$30 million investment is required; if funding can be arranged, curators estimate that order could be restored by 2003.

Looking to the Fords

Two generations after Mr. Edison's death, it may be his personal connections that save the work he left behind. His last project was to refine goldenrod rubber for the automobile tires of a fellow industrialist, Henry Ford. Now Ms. Gerbauckas says she is negotiating a gift from Mr. Ford's descendants. The old associations struck park officials with inspiration.

"There are a lot of modern-day connections to Edison locally, and in business and industries that he actually started," Ms. Gerbauckas said, noting that the Edison family has many philanthropic ties in New Jersey and many friends still alive in West Orange.

"We thought it would be great if they could get together now and preserve the site."

Edison's Blue Amberol Reorganization Plan of 1924

Ron Dethlefson

A 1924 plan to reorganize Edison's cylinder business as a separate corporate division reflects the company's continued support for the Amberola line. Much of the plan seems to have been instituted (note Thomas Edison's approval at the bottom of the first memorandum), although the name ultimately chosen was simplified to "Cylinder Phonograph Division." Also, the new catalog considered a priority was not forthcoming for another two and a half years! We have retyped the original documents, keeping their original spelling, punctuation and capitalization intact.

January 11, 1924.

From:- C. H. TRIBE
To:- Thomas A. EDISON
Subject:- AMBEROLA AUTHORIZATION - NEW POLICY

Your approval is desired upon the following points so far established in the reorganization of the Amberola business.

1. Complete separation of Amberola business from Musical Phonograph Division, administration to be from Building 21.
2. Notification to Department heads in such functions as will follow through work initiated by the new Amberola division.
3. Authorization of employment of one high grade book keeper capable of assuming Office Manager duties.
4. Name of new Amberola organization suggested - - CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH AND RECORD DIVISION OF THOMAS A. EDISON, INC.

Approved
TAK
E.

C. H. Tribe
C. H. TRIBE

January 11, 1924

From:- C. Tribe
To:- Thomas A. Edison
Subject:- AMBEROLA ORGANIZATION

The following general policies are definitely established for the conduct of Amberola business in the future.

1. The gradual elimination of Jobbers from distribution and sale schemes.
2. Building up of a direct by mail service for rec-

ords, instruments and parts to consumers on a cash basis only.

3. Establishment of Dealers where ever a volume of business at present or to be developed is sufficient to guarantee a fair profit to a Dealer. Dealers to be virtually jobbers in that particular sense of the word, with subdealers in their vicinity.
4. Present stock with Jobbers of records and instruments to be liquidated as rapidly as possible through request for their respective inventories and the filling of mail orders by the Jobbers on our orders in cases where their stock shows records not at present stocked at Orange. The same to apply to instruments, etc.
5. Preparation and rapid distribution of a new Amberola Record catalog containing 300 numbers of established selling volume which will constitute dealers' stock and the listing of an additional 650 records of lesser sales volume to be held in stock at Orange subject to dealers' orders.

C. H. TRIBE

Jan. 11, 1924

AMBEROLA NEW PLAN OF ORGANIZATION.

The following proposals relating to the development of the Amberola business as a separate operating unit, are the result of several weeks of careful investigation into the many phases involved in the present conduct of the sales and distribution of Cylinder instruments and records by the Musical Phonograph Division.

Conclusions herein outlined are based largely upon the helpful suggestions received from Messrs. Farrier, Beatty, Shearman, Walsh, Taylor and Huebner and supplemented by contact with Mr. Altengarten and Mr. Wilson as representing Mr. Robinson's office. The methods proposed for adoption parallel the original suggestions of Mr. Thomas A. Edison when first approaching a solution to the Amberola problem.

In order that full pressure shall be consistently exerted upon the development of sales and service on Cylinder Phonographs and records, it is thought best to divorce all Amberola functions from the Musical Phonograph Division and center them under one head without sharing any responsibility for errors, delays, etc. with any department or subdivision of the Musical Phonograph Division.

There are but two ways by which such a change could be accomplished. One the complete separation of the two interests at once, the other a gradual withdrawal.

The present organization in Building 21 is capable of taking over all of the details involved in the conduct of the Amberola business without disrupting or straining any of the relations existing between the Musical Phonograph Division and Disc Jobbers.

Mr. Sherman reports that at present correspondence from all Combination, or Disc and Amberola, Jobbers referring to Amberola products is distinct from that referring to Disc, so that the filling of orders and the

handling of correspondence would follow along in a parallel manner with that at present employed by the Musical Phonograph Division, in fact it is agreed that any correspondence or discussions with jobbers shall be thoroughly discussed with Mr. Farrier or one of his assistants with a view to avoiding any conflict in their interests.

A complete office memorandum covering the process of filling orders to individuals and to dealers has been prepared for the guidance of all persons engaged in Amberola administration. The plan has been followed for two weeks as applied to mail order business and the forms and methods of book keeping and statistical summary have been approved by those gentlemen to whom such reports would naturally go.

The handling of jobbers orders would follow in precisely the same way as dealers' orders are to be handled under the new plan.

The new Amberola organization will combine the functions heretofore handled by Mr. Sherman of the Order and Sales Department. Mr. W.G. Taylor of the Sales Promotion Department and Mr. Huebner in the Accounting and Billing Department of the Musical Phonograph Division. This will require the employment of one Book-keeper in addition to my present staff.

The filling of Export orders under the new plan will coincide with methods at present applied by the Musical Phonograph Division, as well as shipments to Canadian Jobbers requiring special attention to manifests and forms.

The announcements of releases of Amberola Records from the Music Room for Domestic Trade will follow as in the past and will be referred to the Amberola Division instead of the Musical Phonograph Division. Mr. Walsh is quite agreeable to following out the actual production of advertising material through the channels that have already been established for the Musical Phonograph Division, the only change being that suggestions and specifications would originate with the Amberola Division instead of the Musical Phonograph Division.

The last Amberola catalog was issued in 1920. The cost of the American edition being \$19,237.41 and that of the Canadian issue \$5,774.49. We will require a new catalog on the new plan as suggested by Mr. Edison but with lower prices now as compared to 1920, we should be able to issue both editions of a total of 250,000 for not more than \$20,000.

The necessary arrangements for the creation of a new division for the placing of the Amberola business squarely upon its own foundation, permitting intensive effort on Amberola development, would require a capitalization of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.)

C. H. TRIBE

BILLY MURRAY--JIMMY MARTINDALE

THE FINAL CHAPTER

Dick Carty

Although Billy Murray has been my favorite entertainer since 1947, I've always felt like the new-kid-on-the-block compared to the legendary Jimmy Martindale. Most admirers of Murray are familiar with the streetcar ride in 1916 where Murray and Martindale first met and became life-long friends.

On October 25, 1992, I had the pleasure of visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Carolan at their winter residence in California. Mr. Carolan is the step-son of Jimmy Martindale. Since Jimmy's passing in the early 1980's, it's been rumored that his 5,000 records were discarded. Fortunately, the Carolans placed the entire collection in storage and, as a memorial to Jimmy, donated it to the Library of Congress last October. And now, combined with the Jim Walsh collection, the Library probably houses most (if not all) of Murray's achievements.

The Carolans graciously set aside and presented me with terrific Murray memorabilia, including various photographs of the Famous Victor Eight and the 1943 Beacon Record Contract for "Casey and Cohen in the Army." (Ironically, Murray netted the exact amount I recently paid to acquire a copy of that record...fifty dollars!)

The undated photograph at the right was taken during a tour of the "Eight Popular Victor Artists" with Frank Banta and Monroe Silver on stage (Silver poses at a telephone stand with a pedestal 'phone prepared to do one of his "Cohen at the Telephone" monologues). I assume that Nipper and the Victor were a regular part of the show.

- - 0 - -

Dick Carty resides at 408 Strand, Manhattan Beach, California 90266. Phone: (310) 374-6116



Billy Murray is out early



DIRECT MAIL SERVICE



FROM OUR FACTORY TO YOUR DOOR

YOU CAN NOW SEND YOUR ORDERS FOR THE NEW
IMPROVED BLUE AMBEROL RECORDS
DIRECT TO MR. EDISON'S LABORATORY
AT ORANGE, N. J.



(from "Direct Mail" flyer mid-1920s)





Ramona & Her Grand Piano

© 1993 by Peter Mintun

Pianist and collector Peter Mintun has written this biography for a forthcoming compact disk re-issue of Ramona.

In a 1933 interview, the celebrated pianist-singer Ramona told writer Ada Whitney, "They think I chose the name after the book or the song *Ramona*, but it was given to me at birth by my mother [Rachel Margaret DeCamp]. The song hadn't been written then, and as for the book...Had that been written yet? If it was, Mother had never heard of it. She simply wanted to name me after my father Raymond¹, and the nearest name to it was Ramona."

The wealthy parents of Ramona's father believed that his bride was below the social level of their seventeen-year old son so they annulled the marriage, unaware that fifteen-year-old Rachel was carrying his first child. Ramona's mother moved across the border to Ashland, Kentucky, where she may have met her subsequent husband, Charles C. Payne.

Born March 11, 1909, in Lockland², Ohio, Estrild Raymona Myers³ would become internationally known simply as "Ramona." At home in Ashland, Kentucky, the prodigy adopted an unpretentious folksy manner of speech that would endear her to audiences in later years. As for piano-playing, Ramona must have been inspired by her mother, a seamstress who played piano at home for her own amusement. Her young legs unable to reach the piano pedals, Ramona used to play Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* so well that her grandmother Payne had to set up a viewing stool outside the window to convince the neighbors that her little grandchild was actually playing the piano.

Ramona told a reporter that her professional debut took place at the age of 12 in Kentucky: "I was in the seventh grade in school and I can remember still the strenuous objections voiced by my mother when I dashed into the house --- all aflutter --- with the news that the manager of the Ventura [Hotel] had asked me to play the piano with his

At Left: Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Durelle Alexander (standing) in publicity still from film "Thanks a Million" (Fox, 1935). Ramona at left piano; Roy Bargy at far right.

orchestra. But in the end mother surrendered and each Saturday evening my big brother⁴ would take me down to the hotel and wait for me while I played my numbers. It goes without saying that I considered myself the most important kid in the whole state of Kentucky and I really believe the biggest thrill I have ever had came the night the leader allowed me to conduct his band."

The Paynes soon made their home in Kansas City, Missouri, where young Ramona attended school at St. Agnes Academy. Sister Mary Francis, one of the nuns at St. Agnes, instructed young Ramona in the

rudiments of music that enhanced her natural ability. "...As a little girl I took piano lessons. I didn't like to practice, but was made to, like most children, and I certainly am glad now," she told an interviewer. She was as talented at reading music as she was at improvising. According to an old press release, the only black marks on her school record were for sneaking out from time to time to play piano in a Kansas City movie house. Quick-laughing and easy going, Ramona was also known to her school friends as a basketball player and the president of the debating team and senior class.

At station WDAF, a 1000-watt station owned by the *Kansas City Star*, she auditioned in the late '20s as an accompanist and became staff pianist for the *Kansas City Night Hawk Frolic* where, for a three year period, she played in the company of many great performers. Thus began a radio career that would eventually become national. From there she went to Pittsburgh, Pa., and became 10 of the "Twenty Fingers of Sweetness," a program sponsored by Swans Down Sugar on Westinghouse station KDKA.

Radio pianists were plentiful in this era, and Ramona's auditions were often competitive. Although she had set out to be a pianist only, she was encouraged to sing a couple of numbers. One of the first was Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies," into which she interpolated a cadenza from Gershwin's then-recent *Rhapsody In Blue*. A few years later she became Gershwin's friend as well as a popular interpreter of his music⁵. She didn't possess a finely trained, legitimate voice; instead, the listener felt comfortably entertained by her typically American, casual yet faithful interpretations of smart songs. Her piano style had elements of the Harlem stride rhythm, created primarily by the left hand, and an effortless treble octave technique, which developed through Ramona's years as a vaudeville and radio soloist. Her agile left-hand improvisations became a distinctive Ramona trademark.

After hearing her on the radio, the renowned band leader Don Bestor⁶ engaged 16-year-old Ramona as featured singer and pianist when he took his recording and stage orchestra on a coast-to-coast tour. Although Bestor had made many dance records in the mid 1920s, none were made while Ramona was a part of his organization. Nevertheless, Ramona was at that time one of few women featured by a nationally known orchestra. While performing with the Bestor orchestra, she married Howard Davies, a quick-witted horn player. Physical opposites, Ramona was tall and curvaceous while Howard was dashing, of average height with a lean build. Her appearances with Bestor's group led to her own stage act on vaudeville circuits such as Keith, Orpheum and Loew's. In the late 1920s and early '30s most singers stood in front of one microphone and sang with instrumental accompaniment. Very few male singers ---and fewer women--- accompanied themselves.⁷ Whatever Ramona may have lacked in vocal refinement, she more than compensated with her dazzling piano tricks and engaging stage presence.

Ohio's popular (50,000 watt) station WLW in Cincinnati routinely auditioned famous acts from bigger cities to attract listeners to their station⁸. In February 1931 Ramona joined "The Nation's Station," along with singer Seger Ellis, where she played her way into the hearts of thousands of daily listeners on such programs as "King Edward



Ramona and Her Grand Piano, 1934.
A stylish caricature by Marcel Ollis.

Cigar Band," "Sohio Night Club" and "Werk's Bubble Blowers." On "The Doodle Sockers of the Nution's Stution" she was called "Ruminating Ramona" by host Sidney Ten Eyke. The glamorous studio was located on the top eighth floor of the Crosley Radio factory in an unglamorous neighborhood "within smelling distance of the Cincinnati stockyards." Years later Ramona told a reporter, "This is the advice I give young people aspiring to get into show business, by the way: Make good in your own home town first."

At this time Paul Whiteman⁹ had the most famous recording and stage orchestra in the world. Beginning in 1920 his dance records were best sellers and his personal appearances were widely heralded. His organization had nurtured the talents of instrumentalists, singers, lyricists and composers. In 1924 he commissioned George Gershwin to compose *Rhapsody In Blue* for the first Whiteman "Experiment in Modern Music" and would later adopt one of its themes as his radio signature. By 1932 Whiteman's popular Rhythm Boys (Bing Crosby, Harry Barris, and Al Rinker) had gone their separate ways, his star cornetist Bix Beiderbecke had died, several of his important musicians had formed their own bands, and his singing star Mildred Bailey was frequently demanding higher fees. That same year Whiteman was paying Bailey \$350 a week, sweetened by \$600 from NBC. That was big money in a year when a 3-year subscription to "the New Yorker" cost \$10, and a brand new Chevrolet cost as little as \$475.

In the spring of 1932 Paul Whiteman was doing five shows a day at a theatre engagement in Cincinnati. While relaxing in his dressing room, he tuned in WLW and heard Ramona singing in Spanish. A short time later he tuned in and heard her accompanying an Irish singer. Another time he tuned in and caught her accompanying her

own singing. He felt a sense of disbelief when, later that evening, he heard the same one-girl theatrical troupe announcing the news. At this point, not believing her versatility, he called the station manager and howled: "This is Paul Whiteman. Who do you think you are kidding, anyway?" When Paul phoned Ramona and told her who he was, she replied "Oh, sure, and I'm Martha Washington."

At a meeting arranged with Ramona, Whiteman told her to lose some weight¹⁰ and join him when he opened in New York. As Ramona told an interviewer: "I went on a strict diet and four months later showed up in New York minus 40 pounds. No one recognized me, but finally they called Paul, who did remember me. He decided I would start on his radio show¹¹ the next night."

Meanwhile, Mildred Bailey, after singing "We Just Couldn't Say Good-bye" on a Whiteman record, had left in a flurry of law suits and joined CBS. Ramona stepped in and accepted a two-year contract at \$125 a week (about one third what Whiteman was paying Mildred Bailey). Whiteman's original intention was to pair Ramona with crooner "Red" McKenzie, billing them as "Red & Ramona," but McKenzie had plans for his own orchestra.

Ramona debuted on a Whiteman record singing "I Guess I'll Have To Change My Plan." The ornate black and gold RCA-Victor label read: "Featuring Ramona and Her Grand Piano." The date was August 16, 1932. Her initiation into the "big time" had begun.

Over the next five years Ramona would be presented and managed by Paul Whiteman. In concert halls, magazines, movie theaters, auto shows, night clubs, county fairs, films¹², on records and network radio¹³, she would shine with the greatest names in show business.

Ramona's years with Whiteman were her most successful. Her shapely figure, charming voice and vivacious personality added glamour to the already famous Whiteman cast of characters. Deems Taylor called her a lady baritone. She went by one name only, as did the Broadway actress Tamara, the French entertainer Mistinguett and, most assuredly, the "incomparable" Hildegard. Six months after Ramona joined Whiteman she was featured in his "Fifth Experiment In Modern American Music," playing one of the pianos in Johnny Green's "Night Club" (6 Impressions for Orchestra with Three Pianos)¹⁴. She performed regularly with other Whiteman stalwarts --- the Teagardens (Jack and Charlie), Roy Bargy, and the King's Men (Ken Darby, John Dodson, Bud Linn and Rad Robinson). It was more than rumored that she was intimate with alto-soprano saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. Some nights after the orchestra performed, a group of the Whiteman crew would go down to Greenwich Village or the 52nd Street clubs to listen and "sit in" with musicians from other big bands.

Her singing associates in the Whiteman organization included Durelle Alexander, Al Dary, Jack Fulton, Johnny Hauser, Peggy Healy, The King's Men, Bob Lawrence, Jane Vance and a young, song writing vocalist named Johnny Mercer. Ramona's dark eyes, dark hair parted in the middle and high cheekbones gave the impression that she was mysterious,

inscrutable and aloof. But according to Whiteman alumni, "Ramona was always a 'good Joe' and was very well liked." Her friends knew her to be sweet-natured and down to earth. When the orchestra was on the road, her husband Howard enjoyed doing Ramona's shopping including her stockings and toiletries. While the orchestra performed he would often escort a small group of the musicians' wives to a show.

In the world outside the Whiteman orchestra, Ramona met such luminaries as Duke Ellington, Elsa Maxwell, W.C. Handy, Count Basie, Doris Duke and Cole Porter. In Johnny Green's apartment¹⁵ Ramona and other pianists could rehearse on any or all of his three pianos. In her New York apartment she and George Gershwin would play piano together for hours. It was there he showed her and played his early drafts of the "Porgy and Bess" music. Later she would boast that she was the first singer to record Gershwin's "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York."

Unlike today, in the 1930s a song's popularity was not judged by record sales. San Francisco's popular radio pianist Edna Fischer recalled, "In those days we had hit songs, not hit records." Performances were heard regularly on the radio, in ballrooms, clubs, and live prologues to movies. The typical household would not spend 75¢ to \$1.25 to buy two songs on a double-sided record when they could tune in free to the greatest living entertainers all day on the radio. In 1931 a balcony ticket to see Rudy Vallée and Ethel Merman on stage in George White's Scandals cost 50¢.

In 1933 sheet music sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies, but songwriters found that sales of their recorded songs were of little consequence to their royalty statements¹⁶. Yet Paul Whiteman's name was so important to RCA-Victor, the company continued to schedule recording sessions with him regularly. During Whiteman's long engagement at New York's Hotel Biltmore¹⁷, RCA-Victor produced a 12-inch, color-picture record¹⁸ of a two-part medley of his greatest hits to date. On that record, Ramona sings and plays with Roy Bargy. On other recordings Ramona would usually sing the verse to the song and two choruses, sometimes with alternate lyrics. When her sparkling piano improvisations were woven in, the entertainment formula was complete. Ramona could boast that she was RCA-Victor's best-selling female vocalist during the mid 1930s.

Lovers of show music (who could afford to buy records) began to rely on Ramona for her interpretations of songs written for Broadway and Hollywood productions. Her records made for Liberty Music Shop are especially intimate reminders of her fresh and unpretentious style of vocal delivery. Some were lucky enough to hear her in person when she played nightclubs. In the fall of 1935 Ramona and the "Meadowbrook Boys" opened the new Baroque Room of the Madison Hotel¹⁹, alternating with Val Olman's dance orchestra. Concurrently, her name appeared on dozens of RCA-Victor records, the labels of which read "Presented by Paul Whiteman." In France and England the foreign affiliate pressings (His Master's Voice) made her well known in Europe.

In 1936 the Whiteman orchestra was hired by producer Billy Rose to appear in his

extravaganza "Casa Manana" for the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial Exposition²⁰. For the entire summer the orchestra moved to Texas to play the highly successful show, which received national acclaim. It was during "Casa Manana" that Whiteman hired Ken Hopkins, a handsome young arranger, to write orchestrations. Ramona, recently divorced from Howard Davies, married Hopkins before the year ended.

Ramona was one of many performers managed by Whiteman's Artists Management Bureau. This meant if a client hired her to perform in a club or for a private party, Whiteman collected a fee and then gave her part of it. According to her, it wasn't fair, and she unsuccessfully sued to break her \$125-a-week contract. Paul released her from her obligations by the winter of 1936. By March

At right: Photo presented by Ramona to Whiteman singer Durelle Alexander is inscribed: "Hoping you and I stand in Popsie's shade a long time together."

1937, east coast newspapers printed stories about Whiteman's auditions for a replacement for Ramona. A New Jersey paper sided with her and wrote: "Don't enter unless you have voice, personality, style, looks and a figure."

Liberated from Paul Whiteman's management, Ramona sailed to Europe on the luxurious *Normandie* to reap the benefits of her fame. On October 13, 1937, Ramona began a choice engagement in London, headlining with band leader Jack Harris at Ciro's Club on Orange Street. Ramona's American records (with Whiteman) had been selling well in Europe for five years, which significantly enhanced her drawing power before her opening at Ciro's.

In London she was treated like a big American radio and recording star. At one of her Tuesday night shows, she was invited over to the table of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Ramona asked the Duke if there was something special he would like her to sing. He said the song he liked best was "Weep No More, My Baby²¹." "I don't know it," said Ramona, blushing. "Don't be silly," said the Duke politely. "We've got the record at home." So the cabaret star had to explain that when you make a record, you put the music on the piano, run through it, then you record it, and you may never hear the song again. When one made as many records as Ramona, one was entitled to forget a title or two. Subsequently the Duke sent her his copy of the record and she practiced in her apartment so she would have it right by the following Monday when she did a command performance for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Ramona's London engagement was supposed to be for four weeks, but it extended to six months.

The nearest thing resembling a British counterpart to Paul Whiteman was Jack Hylton, whose large orchestra toured the continent, broadcast regularly, appeared in films and made hundreds of records. Hylton later became an important producer of stage entertainment. During Ramona's stay at Ciro's Club there was talk of her doing a tour with Hylton in 1938. While in London, Ramona recorded a few songs for His Master's Voice and tried her hand at writing songs. With tunesmiths Jimmy Kennedy and Michael Carr ("Did Your Mother Come From Ireland") she

To Dorelle
Hoping you & I
stand in Poppy
shade a long
time together
Pamora





Here is Ramona singing (away from her piano) in performance at Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. Also in photo: Banjoist Mike Pingatore (left) and accordionist Vincent Pirro (right).



Rare performance photo of Ramona taken on stage by Charles Strickfadden, Whiteman orchestra sax man.



Transformed into a Hollywood glamour girl: Ramona on the set of "Thanks a Million." Whiteman numbers were not filmed in California, but on a sound stage in New York!



En route to London aboard the luxurious "La Normandie," 1937.

wrote a song entitled "Put Me Behind Bars"²² which was recorded by the dance band of Carroll Gibbons and the Hotel Savoy Orpheans. Meanwhile, in America, Paul Whiteman had settled on Joan Edwards (niece of the great showman Gus Edwards), a singer-pianist with a warm and appealing style.

Ramona returned to America in 1938, and with her husband Ken's help, she formed an all-male band at New York station WOR. But she would soon learn that a national career without Whiteman's help was infinitely more difficult. Only a few years before, she had been heard regularly on the coast-to-coast broadcasts of the "Kraft Music Hall." With Whiteman she had played for large audiences at prestigious places such as Lewisohn Stadium, the Metropolitan Opera House and Carnegie Hall. Her new group, called Ramona and Her Men of Music, made a few records for the Varsity label and toured night clubs and hotels. Competition in Ramona's professional relationship with Hopkins led to his drinking, and their marriage was feeling the strain.

During a tour, Ramona's group was asked to play in White Plains, N.Y. on the same bill with Sammy Kaye. Her marriage to Ken Hopkins had ended, but little did she know that she would later make her home in that part of the country with a new husband, who would change her life in a favorable way.

Ramona told the story to journalist Marie Buck²³: "My husband, Al (Helfer²⁴) and I had met when he was working at the New York radio station from which my 15-minute show was broadcast. Then he went away to war and I went on tour.

"One time when he came back from overseas he saw I was playing an engagement in Miami. He called me and we renewed our acquaintance. A year later, in 1944, we were married in Baltimore, Maryland. I worked up until the time little Ramona²⁵ was born." Born in New York City, "Mona" was their only child and a lifelong source of pride. Paul and Margaret Whiteman sent a silver cup engraved with the baby's name and Paul's famous "potato head" caricature. It was one of the few times Whiteman had communicated with Ramona since their financial rift.

Ramona's last network radio appearance may have been on ABC's "Piano Playhouse" on October 19, 1946. "We went back to Cincinnati and, after the war my husband and I did a morning husband-and-wife radio program. At first I was worried that I wouldn't be able to think of enough things to say, but it ended up that there never was enough time to say all the things I thought of!"

Her daughter reminisced: "When I was about four, the three of us did a radio broadcast, on which I sang, from our house in Cincinnati, and the show prompted many favorable phone calls." After her old radio station WLW began television broadcasting, Ramona tried her hand at the new medium with an ad lib type TV show.

Ramona broadcast a chatty radio show from Cincinnati, "Rendezvous with Ramona," over WLW in 1948. On the half-hour show, she played solos ("Goopy Gear," her famous interpretation of "Blue Skies"), the lush Joe Luger Orchestra backed her up on novelties ("Nola," "Holiday," etc.), and she bantered with co-host Frazier Thomas²⁶ who became a popular television personality in the Midwest. Ramona wrote Paul Whiteman at the American

Broadcasting Company in New York where he successfully spun records on the "Paul Whiteman Club." Whiteman responded politely²⁷, "It was so nice to hear from you. I had been wondering where you'd been. I am so glad to know that you have a nice radio show of your own and that your husband too is doing fine. The baby, I suppose is a young lady by now; and I can imagine how proud you are of her. Margaret joins me in sending our best to you and the baby, and the kindest regards to your husband. Fondly, 'Pops'."

The radio network beckoned again from New York city, only this time it was not for Ramona and her Grand Piano. Her husband Al was in great demand as a sports announcer. In Ramona's words, "I told him point blank I would not live in New York again. Then, remembering those three days [performing in White Plains] I told him I would live in Westchester." So she eschewed the career of glamour for the suburban life of mother, housewife, and gardener. The sophisticated cabaret singer who once broadcast coast-to-coast with America's most famous orchestra was now participating in the St. Paul's Methodist Church and volunteering her talent playing piano and organ for civic benefits. A cigarette smoker for many years, Ramona's baritone voice descended to bass by the time she sang in the choir. She told writer Marie Buck that her civic work "gives me a goal to aim for in my daily practicing, which I do to keep my fingers limber. Once you stop playing, you

can't play --- your fingers just won't do what you want them to."

The family was so close-knit the parents moved to Denver to be close to daughter Mona when she studied flute and voice at Denver University. Ramona became very involved with her daughter's education and was in great demand as piano accompanist at all her daughter's recitals. Her daughter boasted that Ramona "...could accompany better than anybody in the music department at Denver University." By now her love of family had greatly overshadowed her show-business yearnings, and her husband's career greatly surpassed hers. He was celebrated for making the annual presentation, beginning in 1947, of the famous Heisman Memorial Trophy. Helfer was semi-retired in 1969 when he and Ramona moved to a house by a golf course near Sacramento, California. He had an interest in a radio station and was highly respected as announcer and broadcasting consultant. On December 14, 1972, after an eight-month bout with cancer, Ramona died in a Sacramento hospital. She was 63. The Sacramento Bee obituary was headlined: "Ramona Helfer, Wife of Sports Caster, Dies."

Organist James Roseveare was enamored of her style and remarked, "Her records make you feel like you're at a party where one of the guests takes over the piano and does a few smart and sophisticated songs." During Ramona's glamorous career it was esteemed announcer and music critic Milton Cross who had said, "Everyone who loves the piano just naturally loves *Ramona*."

-Peter Mintun

LIBERTY MUSIC SHOPS

PRESENT

TWO OF TO-DAY'S HIT TUNES

RECORDED BY



RAMONA
AND HER GRAND PIANO

L-210 'Long as You Got Your Health
The Ozarks Are Callin' Me Home \$1

"Long as You Got Your Health" the smart lyrical song hit of "The Show Is On" combined with Cole Porter's Hill-Billy song from "Red, Hot and Blue".

Ramona at her best—Remember her
"Too Good for the Average Man" Record!

Ramona on the cover of a Liberty Music Shops sales brochure for February, 1937.

1. Raymond Pendery Myers
2. Hamilton County
3. Estrild was also the name of Ramona's maternal grandmother.
4. Big but younger half-brother, Charles "Tip" Payne, Jr.
5. Gershwin songs Ramona performed during her career included "I Got Rhythm," "There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York," "Summertime," "My Cousin In Milwaukee," "S Wonderful," and excerpts from Rhapsody In Blue.
6. Don Bestor (September 23, 1889-January 13, 1970)
7. Women singers who could accompany themselves, such as Annette Hanshaw or Ruth Etting, did not play with acceptable musicianship, so they were provided with professional accompanists to complement their performances.
8. It was at WLW that Thomas "Fats" Waller began his vocal satirizations of banal song lyrics during his 1932-1933 stint there.
9. Paul Whiteman (March 28, 1890-December 29, 1967)
10. In 1931 Whiteman's fiancée Margaret Livingston forced him to shed 100 pounds before she would meet him at the altar.
11. Ramona became part of Whiteman's "Pontiac Chieftains" broadcast on NBC in 1932.
12. Ramona's film appearances include "Social Register" (Columbia, 1934), "Eggs Mark The Spot" (Vitaphone short, 1934) and "Thanks A Million" (Fox, 1935).
13. Ramona's most important radio appearances were on the Kraft Music Hall, which made its debut on NBC in 1933. The stars were Al Jolson and Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. On December 5, 1935, Bing Crosby succeeded Whiteman as the star,

although they shared the first four broadcasts (Paul in New York, Bing with Jimmy Dorsey's band in Hollywood)

14. "Night Club" had its debut at Carnegie Hall January 25, 1933. The composer John W. Green (October 10, 1908-May 14, 1989) played First Piano; Roy Bargy played second, and Ramona third piano and celeste. They repeated the concert two weeks later in Boston Symphony Hall.
15. Johnny Green's apartment was at 430 East 86th Street, Manhattan. Green was a gifted composer, pianist and arranger, and noted womanizer. Ramona may have been familiar with more rooms than the ones that contained pianos.
16. Sales of RCA-Victor popular records sank to an all-time low of 1,648,214 in 1933, compared to the prosperous sales figures of 1927, which were 34,234,937.
17. Beginning in the summer of 1932 Whiteman played at the rooftop Cascades Room, Hotel

Biltmore, Madison and E. 43rd St., NYC.

18. "A Night With Paul Whiteman At The Biltmore", Victor record 39000. Subsequently pressed on standard black shellac as Vi 36199 "Whiteman Medley." As early as 1931, Whiteman's orchestra also appeared on some of the first commercial long-play records (10-inch records that played at 33-1/3 revolutions per minute only on costly new RCA phonographs). Unfortunately, the timing was completely wrong for these media innovations.
19. Madison Hotel, E. 58th St. and Madison, NYC.
20. The Whiteman Orchestra had appeared at the Hippodrome Theatre in Billy Rose's 1935 extravaganza *Jumbo* (with a score by Rodgers and Hart).
21. In the fall of 1933 "Weep No More, My Baby" was written by Johnny Green and Edward Heyman for the Broadway show *Murder At The Vanities*. The RCA Victor recording (24384) was made in

New York on August 24, 1933, and was sold in England on His Master's Voice label. The song was interpolated into Green's British show *Mr. Whittington* and became a mild success, recorded by numerous British orchestras and singers.

22. "Put Me Behind Bars" © 1937 Peter Maurice Music Co., Ltd., London. Other song writing attempts include "What a Night For Love" (M: Ramona; L: Floria Vestoff) © 1944; "Whenever I'm With You" (M: Ramona; L: Ed Brainard) © 1945, and "Nothing Ever Happens To Me" (M: Ramona; L: Floria Vestoff) © unknown.
23. *Reporter Dispatch*, White Plains, N.Y., Sat., Feb. 19, 1955
24. George Alvin Helfer (September 26, 1912-May 16, 1975)
25. Ramona Margaret Helfer (July 13, 1945 -)
Nickname: Mona
26. Frazier Thomas (1919-1985)
27. Whiteman's letter dated Jan. 19, 1948.



"Play List" from the face of Paul Whiteman's first Victor picture record.

HERE & THERE

Paul Charosh's article on "celebrity" Berliner records in our last issue included an appeal for information about Berliners in readers' collections for his research. Although he heard from a number of readers, Paul is ready to sweeten the pot, so to speak, to encourage additional participation. Therefore, to anyone who sends data on U.S. Berliners, Paul will send a cassette tape of the 1896 recitation "On the Gramophone" by David C. Bangs. Contact him at: 224 Beach 141 St., Belle Harbor, NY 11694.

Mike Wright tells us that Demos Doulou has taken over John Doulou's "Musical Biography" series after his father's untimely death. Those wishing to continue their collection (especially the Billy Murray tapes) may contact Demos at: 6302 Woodland Blvd., Pinellas Park, FL 34665.

Jim Wood wonders if there are any other collectors experimenting with acoustical recording! He would especially like to hear from anyone who is (or was) engaged in acoustic disc recording. Please drop Jim a line at: 5936 Plateau Dr., Felton, CA 95018.

The fourth annual "Old Time Radio and Phonograph Show," sponsored by the Hudson Valley Antique Radio and Phonograph Society, will be held on Saturday, October



One of Ramona's custom-created Christmas cards.

23 from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. at its new location at the Holiday Inn, Exit 122 off Route 17, in Middletown, New York. For the first time this is an all-indoor show. For more information, contact Gramm-O-Phone Antiques at (914) 427-2602, or Victorian Talking Machine Co. at (914) 561-0132.

Steve Barr's "The Almost Complete 78 RPM Dating Guide (II)" has been selling well, and the first edition may soon be sold out. Many of our readers may be able to fill in some data on the more obscure early labels, which will be incorporated into future editions.

No obituary column this issue. Some recent deaths of singers who don't quite go back to the "Graphic Era" are Earl Wrightson (stage and television performer) at age 77; and Boris Christoff, operatic basso, at 79.

Finally, Tom Novak didn't enter our 1939 Edison label contest, but he did enclose the following drawing for fun recently. We thought you'd enjoy seeing one more variation!



**HARRY LAUDER'S
TORONTO ROTARY RECORD**

In examining evidence of Lauder's career one comes to see how his standing as an international entertainer led him into various and sundry activities to embellish and promote his public persona. Such is his 1921 private recording on behalf of the Toronto Rotary which has always been somewhat puzzling to me. An article in the January 1992 "Rotarian" by T. Storm Hunter was called to my attention by Lauder's discographer, Darrell Baker. That led to an effort to contact The Rotary Club of Toronto and its executive director, Al Crawford. At Mr. Crawford's suggestion the club's archivist/historian, John Storey, checked what records were available.

Storm Hunter's article dealt with Lauder's commercial recordings that were Rotary related so I shall not discuss them here.

Undated papers indicated that the Toronto club was able to prevail on Lauder to record a message at The Gramophone Co. studios. This was done May 21, 1921 and assigned matrix # Cc-197-1. It was played on a Stentorphone to the delegates at the international convention in Edinburgh in 1921. The Stentorphone used compressed air to enable the gramophone to project the recorded sound to a large audience.

The following are excerpts from the material unearthed by John Storey among the papers of The Toronto Rotary Club:-

"After playing popular Scottish music, this message from Sir Harry Lauder was delivered:- 'HELLO! FELLOWS! You wouldn't think I was from Toronto, Canada -- Well, I am not - but the Toronto Rotary Club asked me to talk to you Fellows through the gramophone - this message was made in England - I suppose you know where England is - it's a bit of land adjoining Scotland owned by Englishmen and run by Scotsmen. Rotarians - and when I say "Rotarians" I've paid you the greatest compliment there is in any language (including the Scotch). I use the

word not only as a fraternal password - not only as a tribute to our comradeship in one of the greatest causes in the world today, but in that international sense of brotherhood where there are no barriers or boundaries to our friendships. It's a wonderful thing, this Rotary. It's the LEAGUE OF SERVICE - that's what the world needs - International Conventions bring about the world brotherhood of SERVICE, and so we must carry on the great gatherings for good.

'TORONTO, CANADA, wants the Convention in 1924. Let me tell you about Toronto. It's an Indian word meaning "a happy meeting place", and mind you, the Indians knew what they were talking about. I hope you will all meet in convention in Toronto in 1924.'"

The purpose of the recording becomes clear, but other questions are raised. Why or how was Toronto able to get Lauder to promote Toronto? The Gramophone Co. and Victor recording logs do not provide any indication that Lauder ever did such a thing at any other time. He was a member of The Rotary Club of Glasgow. One wonders if there was a personal tie with the Toronto club of which we are unaware. The recording was on a 12 inch disc. Was the Scotch music that preceded Lauder's message recorded on the disc or was it a live performance? What were the tunes? Were they Lauder's? Were they performed by an orchestra or perhaps a pianist?

Toronto got the '24 convention, perhaps in part due to Sir Harry.

Lauder in his autobiography, **Roamin' In The Gloamin'**, refers to being in Toronto in 1917. The records of The Rotary Club of Toronto indicate that he was also there January 22, 1919 and November 25, 1921. There were no doubt other occasions.

It seems evident from his remarks that Lauder was quite involved with his support of Rotary International and its many works. His experiences in the World War I era and the loss of his son in that conflict probably strongly influenced his feelings in this regard. If not in the beginning, it

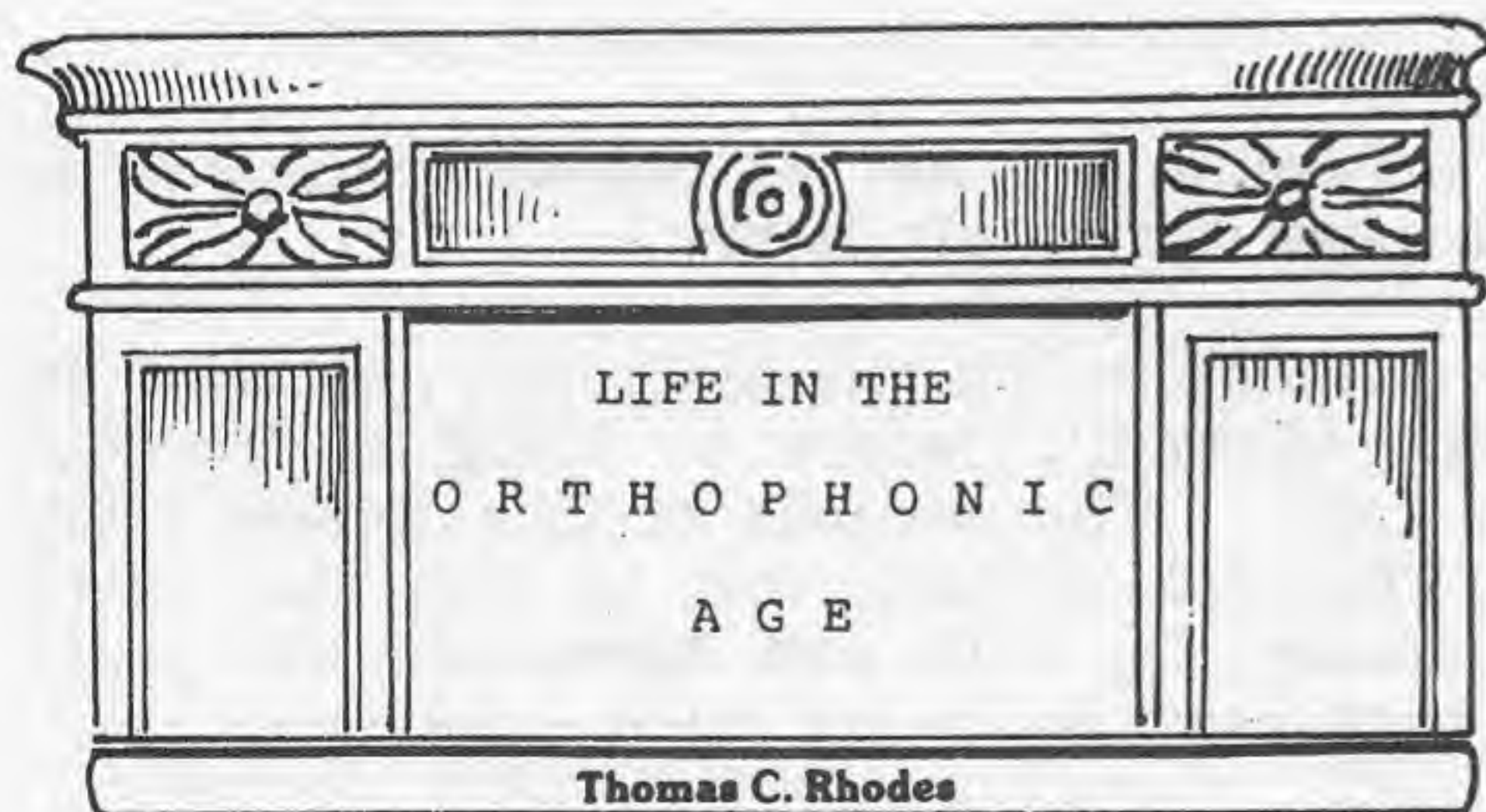
surely became much more than merely a means to garner publicity.

EMI Archives do not seem to have any more details on the Toronto recording. The district library of Hamilton, Scotland which is in possession, courtesy of the Lauder Trust, of some of the discs from Lauder's own collection does not seem to have this disc among its holdings. Neither of the Rotary clubs of Edinburgh or Glasgow seem to have the actual disc or data pertaining to it.

Would any collector that might have any leads concerning this recording please forward them to this contributor, Robert F. Conn, at 412 West Harris Street, Kirbyville, Texas 75956.



Harry Lauder's loyalty to the Rotary was also evidenced by this 1916 recording.



Collecting Orthophonics
(Special)

This issue's article comes from guest columnist Bob Waltrip, who writes about the conventional pot metal Orthophonic soundbox.

IN DEFENSE OF THE POT METAL ORTHOPHONIC REPRODUCER by Bob Waltrip

The earliest Victor Orthophonic sound box had a thin diaphragm, a solid brass housing, and an open throat. Practically every collector whom I come across thinks that this brass head is infinitely superior, and is desirable above all others. I will admit that the brass head is rare, and that it doesn't warp, but if one seeks the best sound from his Orthophonic phonograph, the brass reproducer won't give it.

The open-throat brass reproducer was discarded by Victor for a reason, and replaced by a model that had a thicker diaphragm, a solid pot metal housing, and a restricted throat opening. Further restriction was added by means of a round impedance plate that was bolted to the inside of the backplate, in a position directly behind the diaphragm, so as greatly to reduce the air space there.

In order to investigate the reason for this change, we need to consider the phonograph that bears the Orthophonic standard, the Credenza. The Credenza horn is a folded, re-entrant type. In this machine, the sound does not travel in a straight line, but around ever-widening U-turn corners. The pot metal reproducers were intended to give the sound more initial "push," in order to get the sound around those corners more efficiently, and to give the phonograph a less hollow and more "up front" effect.

The most important change toward more efficiency was to make the new reproducer housings of zinc instead of brass, because zinc is softer and lighter and more acoustically neutral. Thus, it is less apt to impair the reproducer's sound by vibrating sympathetically with it, causing some tones to weaken, and others to distort. Die-cast zinc is called "pot metal" because its melting point is so low that it can be liquefied in an ordinary cast-iron pot, and doesn't require an expensive high-temperature crucible.

Pot metal's low melting point is both a blessing and a curse, however. When cast, it must be poured into the mold as cool as possible, but as hot as necessary. In order to give the fairly thin Orthophonic reproducer shell enough strength to hold its shape, the zinc was alloyed with harder and heavier metals. The mold for the Orthophonic shell was set up as if the shell were lying face-down. If the molten mixture was poured into it while too hot, the heavy particles of alloy would settle toward the bottom before the casting solidified. If a casting settled out of solution like this, the thinnest top parts of it would gradually expand over many years. That is why we now see some pot metal Orthophonic shells that are still in good shape, while others have warped outward at their thinnest parts; the circumferences of the shells and the backplates. The warpage does not continue indefinitely. It is entirely safe to assume that after sixty-odd years, they have warped as much as they ever shall. I correct warpage during restoration, and I guarantee that the sound box will remain stable.

In addition to a zinc housing, the pot metal Orthophonic sound box introduced a thicker diaphragm. The early diaphragm that was made by pressing a thin foil sheet between two molds was left behind, and a new diaphragm was constructed by electroplating metal molecules onto a single form. While retaining the initial design and form, Victor achieved more "punch" with a more massive diaphragm. Conjointly, the "megaphone" of the sound box throat was made smaller, and more pointed, in order to give the sound more initial velocity, and more "presence" when amplified through the convoluted passages of the Credenza horn. To demonstrate this effect for yourself, cup your hands at the sides of your face, and shout "Hey!" Now, bring your hands inward and cup them at the sides of your mouth and shout again. This second, more forceful sound that you hear was achieved in the pot metal Orthophonic sound box by restricting the amount of air behind the diaphragm, then pumping it through a hole in the impedance plate that was smaller than the throat.

I have devised a way to center the impedance plate perfectly behind the diaphragm, then put it closer to the diaphragm than the original technology allowed. The degree of improvement is considerable. The restored brass reproducer does sound ringy and hollow, compared to the restored pot metal reproducer. "Restore" is the operative word. The reason that one cannot tell much difference between one as-is reproducer and another, using an as-is machine, is that none of them can possibly be functioning properly; unless they have been kept in a vacuum for the past half-century.

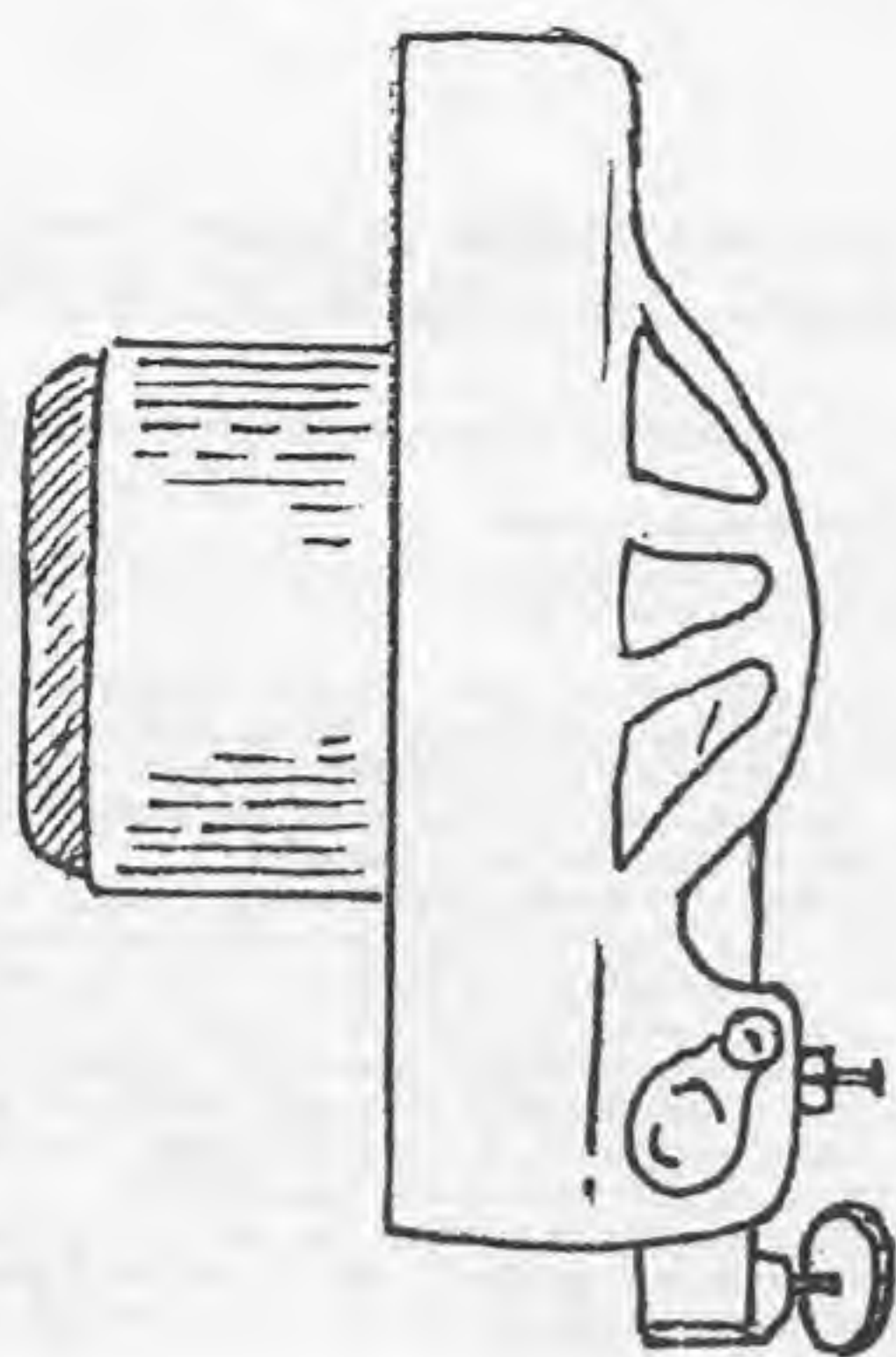
Collectors' universal lust for brass reproducers is entirely without justification, if one is considering sound quality. Few people do consider sound quality. In my experience, only about 10% of collectors actually listen to their machines for artistic satisfaction. I shall ask that minority to abandon the notion that the Victor Talking Machine Company got stingy in 1926, and started making inferior sound boxes out of cheap pot metal. As Thomas C. Rhodes has said, "One should not confuse less-expensive construction materials with bad design."

Correspondence to Tom Rhodes may be addressed to him at 26 Austin Avenue, Apt. #106, Greenville, RI 02828.

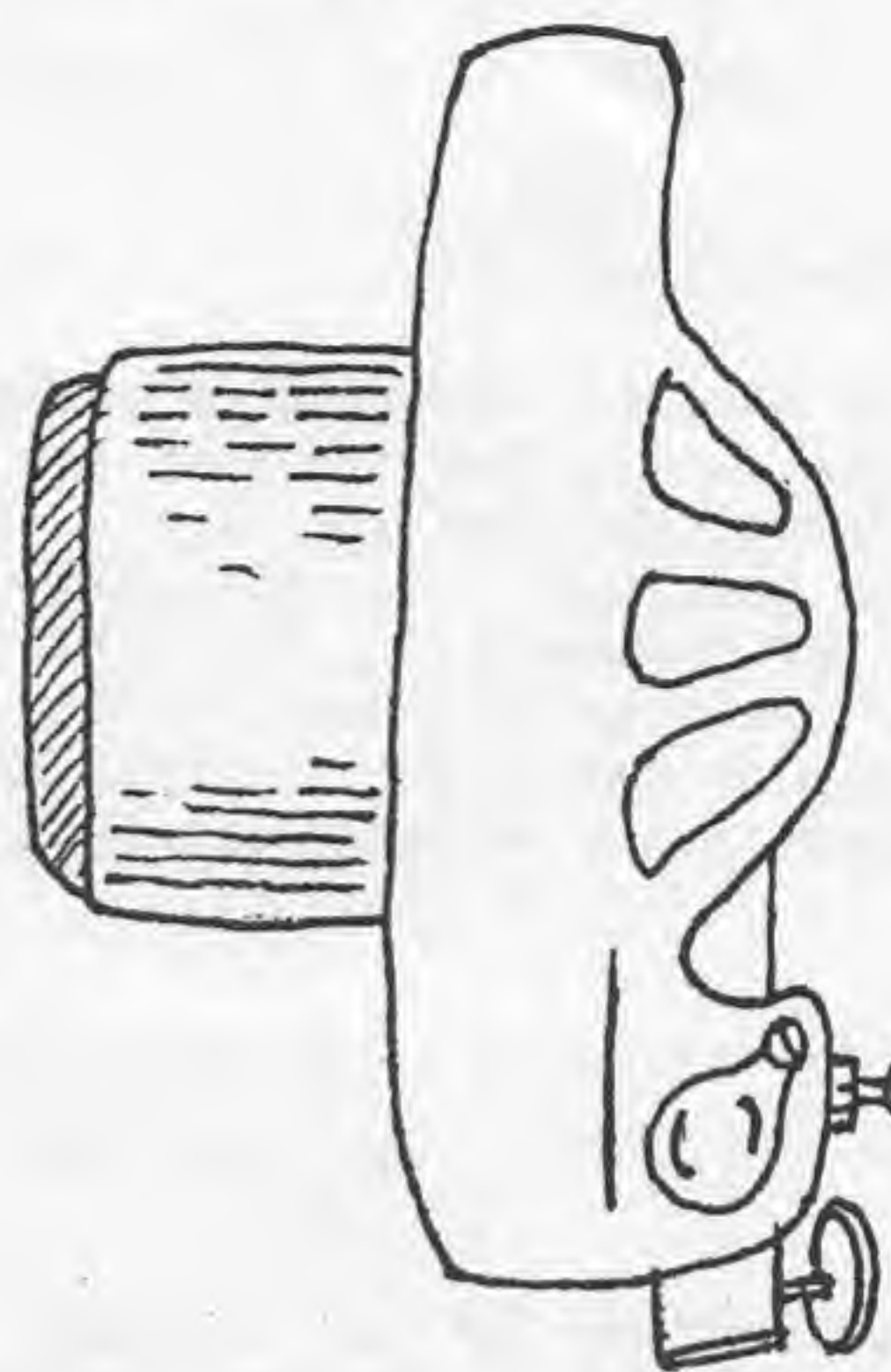
Bob Waltrip can be reached at Box 1404, Levelland, TX 79336.

COMMON WARP PATTERNS OF THE ORTHOPHONIC BOX

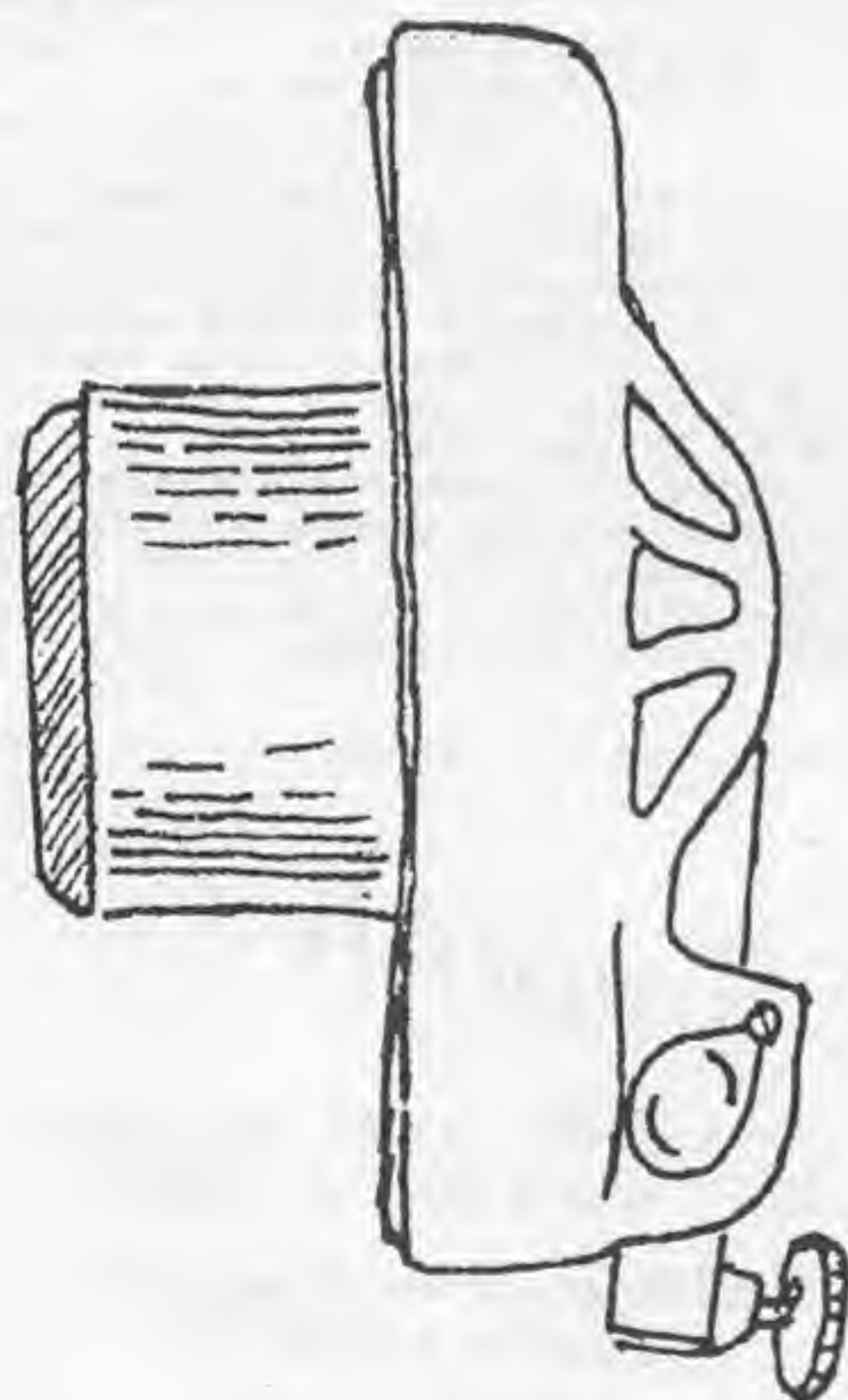
A.



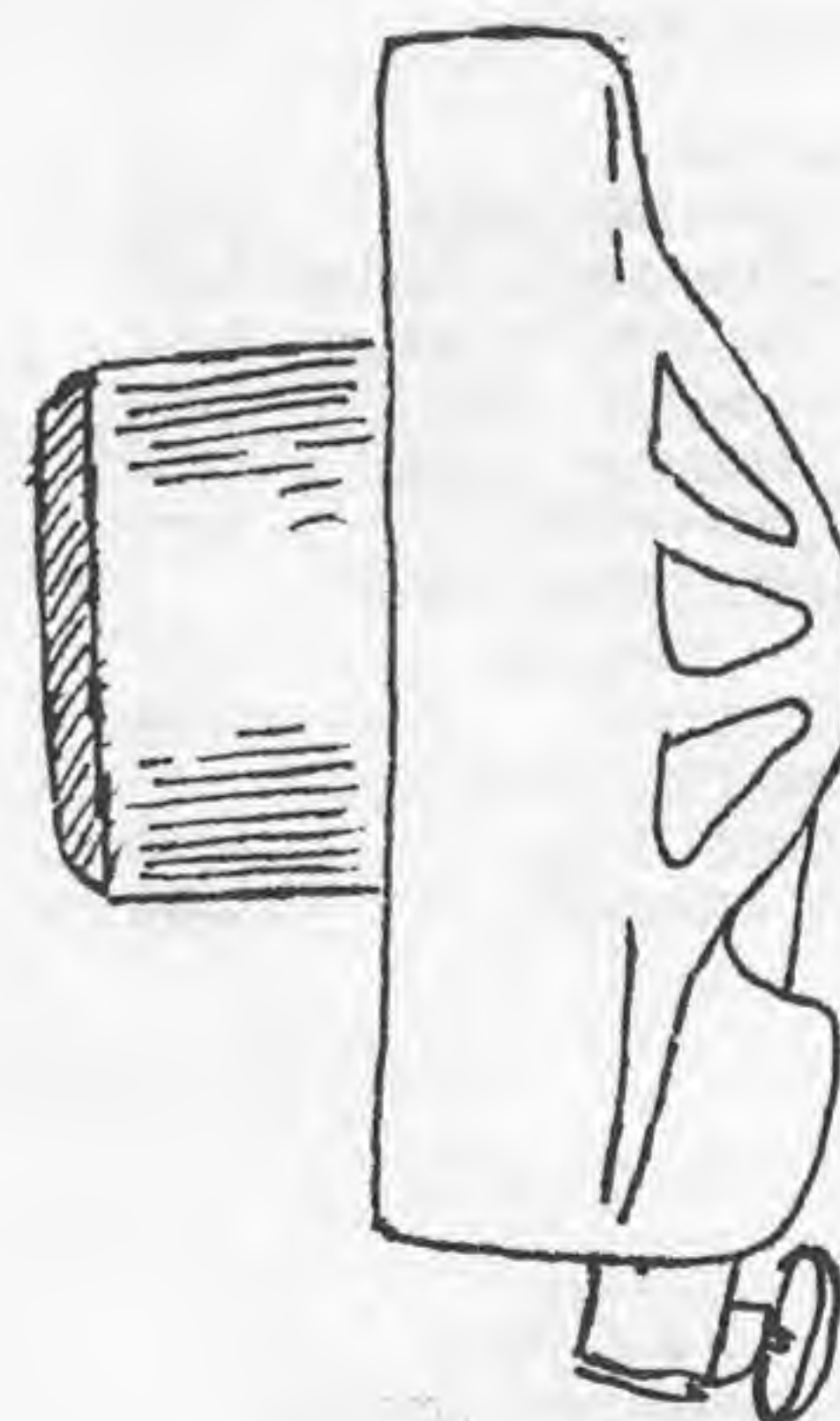
B.



C.



D.



- A. Original Orthophonic soundbox in good condition or restored
- B. "Saucer-warped" or dishwarped soundbox
- C. Swollen or sunken backplate of housing
- D. "Bowl-warped" soundbox, front casting swollen out of line.

FROM THE EDISON VAULT

Ray Wile

New "Rating Code" of 1927

For those individuals who have encountered weekly Edison Diamond Disc release sheets from the last few years of the Edison business, the existence of a strange code may have been puzzling. The following memo will provide a clue for understanding the code. Incidentally, the doodler seems to have been drawing the rear anatomy of a horse or mule. The initials TAE incorporated into the figure seems to raise interesting possibilities!

April 8, 1927.

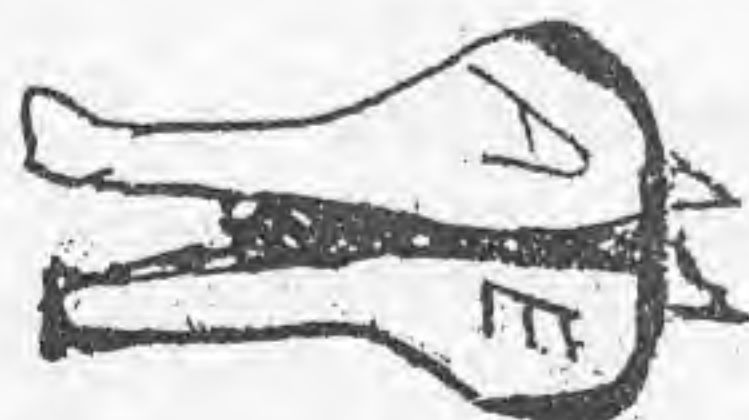
Mr. A.M. Farrier

Your classification for the "initial stock plan" as listed below, are O.K. with Mr. Bradshaw and me.

1-F Flash-- sure hits (Dances)	\$1.00
2-F Flash--Possible hits (Dances)	1.00
1-V Vocal (Specials)--Hits	1.00
2-V Vocal " --possible hits	2.00
3-V Vocal " --Standard & Sacred	1.00
3-V Vocal " --Doubtful Popular	1.00
4-V Vocal " --Quality hits	1.50
4-V Vocal " --Standard songs	1.50
5-V " <i>Organic</i>	2.00
1-N Instrumental (Specials) Hits other than dance	1.00
2-N " " Standard	1.00
3-N " " quality hits	
	Organ etc. 1.50
4-N " ultra standard	1.50

A.L. Walsh

CC: Messrs: Bradshaw-Buchanan and Shegman



In the next column we illustrate a portion of Weekly Bulletin No. 50. We can interpret the code following the price of Vernon Dalhart's record to mean "Standard," while Jack Stillman's release is a "Flash--Possible Hit." The single words "Ebudae" and "Ebulo" were telegraphic codes. They were used by the trade to avoid errors with numbers, as well as to keep telegrams cheaper by substituting code words for multi-word rec-

ord titles. (for additional release sheets, see Ron Dethlefsen's Edison Disc Artists and Records 1910-1929)

O! Dem Golden Slippers (Bland)
My Carolina Home (McMichen, Layne, Stokes) } Vernon Dalhart & Co.
Triangle Music Pub. Co., N. Y. C.

52174 \$1.00-3V
Ebudae A good old tune—O! Dem Golden Slippers—lately come into tremendous popularity. Many enthusiastic requests for it, from dealers and owners in all parts of the country.

So here it is—an up-to-date version—done the Dalhart way. You can't help but like it! You can't help but sell it!

Familiar, rollicking old melody. A long string of funny verses, with all the solemnity of a negro spiritual, but deliciously comic! Sung delightfully, too—by the inimitable Dalhart—in his best darky voice and manner. Played delightfully by his "Company"—in swinging, toe-tapping rhythm. Multi-colored interludes scattered among the verses—sometimes a mouth-organ featured, sometimes a banjo—sometimes a fiddle, sometimes a jewsharp—with southern guitar always throbbing a tuneful tempo in the background.

Hear it!—Demonstrate it!—Watch it sell to everybody! . . . Another "request" number is My Carolina Home—a new song of the Dalhart type—already in high favor with all sections of the public.

(This record will be featured to your trade in the February Record Supplement.)

Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life—Intro: To the Land of My Own Romance—Waltz, with Vocal Refrain by Victor Hall
(Victor Herbert) M. Witmark & Sons Jack Stillman's Orchestra

'N' You—Waltz, (Schofer, Wayne, Klickmann) Edw. B. Marks Music Co.
Jack Stillman's Orchestra—

Intro: "The Songsters Ken and Vic"

52175 \$1.00-2F
Ebulo Ah! Sweet Mystery—the "Dream Melody" of Victor Herbert—lovely waltz music which, in up-to-date arrangement, has become one of the popular dance melodies of the season. It will be the favorite at many a party this winter, especially in this colorful Jack Stillman recording. The tuba bass is exceptionally good, and there is a long and interesting—very interesting—vocal refrain by Victor Hall. . . . 'N' You presents a new kind of waltz rhythm which is attracting a great deal of attention. It will no doubt appeal to young dancers, who will also like the snappy singing and humming by Ken and Vic. These songsters are a new duet team, of whom we predict that the public will hear a great deal—and demand more—in the near future.

Smooth!

As a baby's cheek! As silk! As "aged in the wood"! As plate glass! As a mill pond!

That's the smoothness of the newest
EDISON Records.

No exaggeration—honestly!

▽ ▽ ▽

Why not invest a few minutes in happiness?
A surprise awaits you at your Edison Dealer's Store.

We are delighted to announce that Ray Wile received the Association for Recorded Sound Collection's third Lifetime Achievement Award at ARSC's annual conference in Chicago this past May. ARSC publicity chairman Tim Brooks writes that Ray, a retired professor from Queens College, New York, has been writing since the 1950s, specializing in early corporate history and the recording activities of Thomas A. Edison. The amiable honoree accepted the award with a short, gracious speech in which he stressed the importance of wearing old clothes when digging in dusty archives!



Phonograph record research involves the reading of past publications and documents whenever able to be located. It also relies in no small measure on conversations with individuals who, through the years, have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of its early history. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to three such individuals who have helped me through the years: Len Kunstadt, editor and publisher of Record Research Magazine; Harold Flakser, renowned authority in international records; and Allen Koenigsberg, editor and publisher of Antique Phonograph Monthly.

"Lifetime Companions"

Is dog really man's best friend? A Victor enthusiast forever was John Van Dewalle, who was physically united with "His Master's Voice" since approximately 1901. He proudly displays his loyalty on two occasions thirty-six years apart. One wonders if he might have had the Columbia "Magic Notes" tattooed on his other arm!

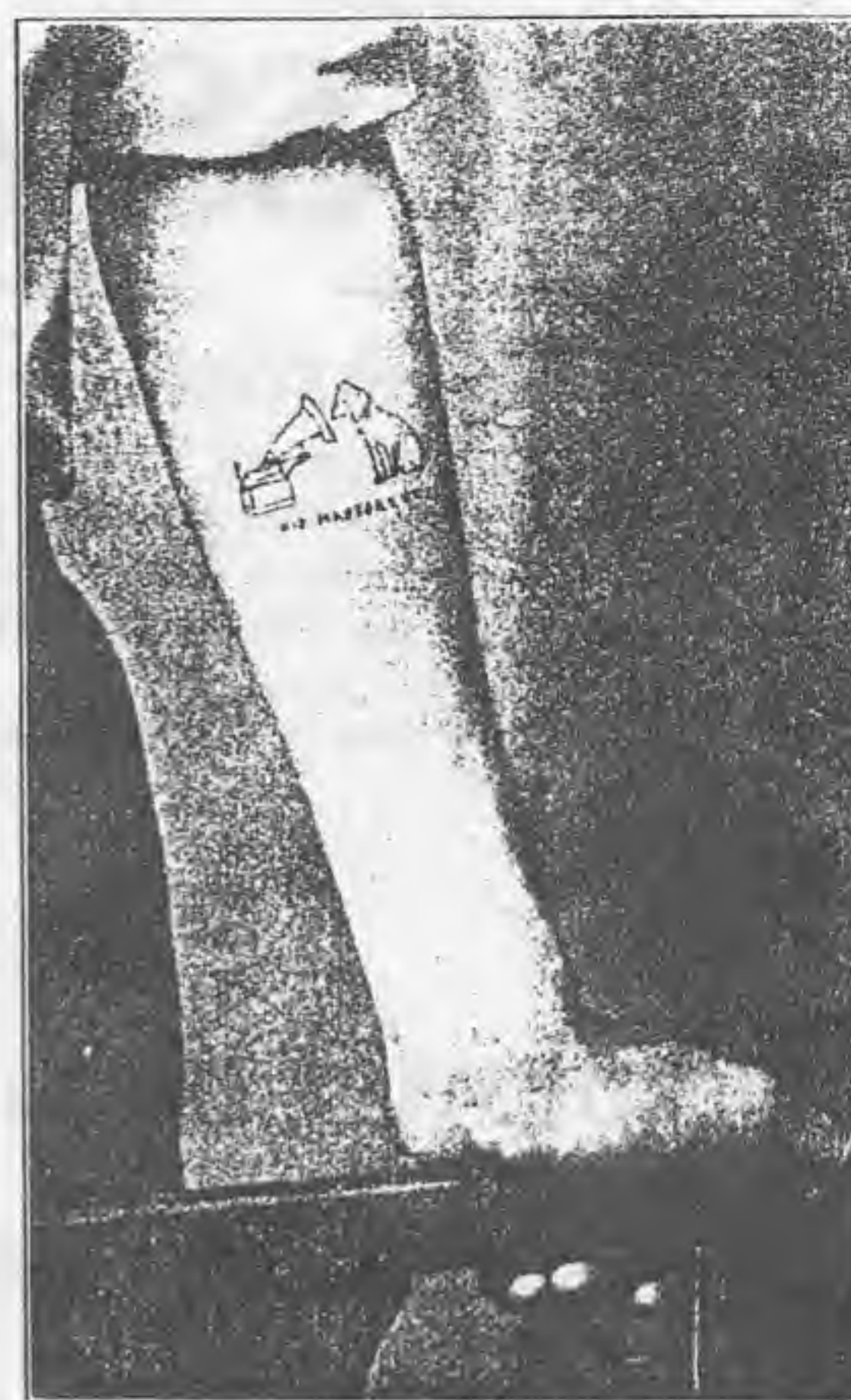
October, 1908

THE TALKING MACHINE WORLD.

A VICTOR ENTHUSIAST

Is John Dan De Walle, Who Boasts That the Victor Trade-Mark Is Part and Parcel of Him—Shows His Hand in Good Faith.

Speaking of Victor enthusiasts, it is safe to say there are few in the country to compare with John Van De Walle, proprietor of the Van De Walle Music Co., of Seymour, Ind., whose "strong left arm" we reproduce herewith, showing the famous trade-mark of the Victor, "His Master's Voice," which was tattooed on his arm about seven years ago. It is something so novel that we take the liberty of reproducing it, as we feel sure it will interest the entire trade. It is certainly effective and original advertising.



(1908)

Record Retailing

November 1944



"Van Dewalle, pioneer Victor dealer of Seymour, Ind., carries his trademark with him, as he shows Record Merchandising Manager Jack Hallstrom on a recent visit in Chicago."

We continue with the article contributed by John Newton from the June, 1923 Wireless Age. It outlines the various companies' attitudes toward allowing their artists to broadcast. Originally we intended to run this in two instalments, but have found it necessary to divide it into at least three. Brunswick and Columbia are presented with this issue.

Will the Great Artists Continue?

Victor and Brunswick Companies Say "No" to Their Exclusive Performers—All Other Recording Firms Are Willing, Even Anxious to Have Their Stars Heard—Broadcasting's Effect on Phonograph Industry

By Ward Seeley

Brunswick Artists Must Get Permission

And the Company Is Little Inclined to Give It

WHEN you hear a Brunswick exclusive artist broadcasting in person you may be sure that the company has investigated the program, the object of its transmission, and the quality of the transmitter.

Keen discrimination marks the attitude of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. toward radio. Certain exclusive Brunswick record artists have been heard on the air, in a few instances.

Such instances have been rare, and the subject of special negotiation. In general, the attitude of the company is against permitting their artists to broadcast, as may be seen from the following statement by A. J. Kendrick, General Sales Manager, Phonograph Division, of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co.:

"As yet, we have not granted permission to artists with whom we have exclusive recording contracts to sing for radio broadcasting stations. This stipulation has been waived in one or two instances of unusual character, but, until we have come to more definite conclusions pertaining to the value of the radio broadcasting of recording and concert artists, we prefer to withhold this permission, where we are empowered to do so.

"In all our exclusive artists' contracts we have a radio clause.

"We have no supplemental agreements with artists, but consider each instance individually, pertaining to ra-



Mario Chamlee, tenor whose magic voice ranks him close to Caruso, is an exclusive Brunswick artist. If Brunswick says "yes" he may broadcast—but the "yes" is hard to hear

BRUNSWICK

Yes and No. Yes, in certain unusual cases. No, as a general rule. Exclusive Brunswick artists are prevented from broadcasting by radio clauses in their contracts, and the company insists on the contract being respected.

"Radio, to the degree that it helps to advance good music would assist rather than retard the phonograph business."

dio broadcasting. We have felt radio requires some further development and improvement before a worthy transmission of an artist's work could be an entirely dependable procedure. We do not mean to state that there are not now broadcasting stations able to do justice to such an event, but we have been governed by the desire to insure our recording artists being presented to the public only under the most favorable circumstances.

"Furthermore, we have not yet decided that unrestricted appearances of our artists in that respect might, in some measure, retard the demand for their records. This is an open question, however, and as yet we have formulated no definite viewpoint.

"We have made several phonographs with combination radio sets for experimental purposes, but have no figures available which would indicate that radio has endangered or helped the phonograph business, particularly in view of the fact that the pronounced progress of the Brunswick company in the phonograph field has been such that we could not really be considered a barometer on this situation.

"However, we are inclined toward the opinion that radio, to the degree that it helps to advance good music, would assist rather than retard the phonograph business. Anything which has tended to make the home more interesting and attractive would probably help to broaden the sale of musical instruments designed for the home."

Columbia Urges Its Stars to Broadcast

21.

Nearly All Important Columbia Performers Have Done So

"WE have no set policy directed against radio," said H. A. Yerkes, assistant general manager of the Columbia Graphophone Company. "In fact, we have urged that our exclusive artists sing for the radio whenever possible. We have even made arrangements for them to do so in certain cases. You can take the Columbia catalogue and go through it and you will find that nearly all the big names in it have been heard by radio."

That is in essence, the attitude of the Columbia Company, and Mr. Yerkes made it plain that it springs from the feeling that rather than injuring the talking machine business, radio broadcasting, if it has any appreciable effect, is beneficial. The Columbia company, like all the other talking machine manufacturers, is studying the subject with very great care. Their executives have tested out various makes of radio receivers and have even examined the possibilities of combining receivers more or less closely with Columbia machines.

The final result is this: the Columbia company considers that radio and the talking machine occupy two separate fields; that while they overlap to a certain extent, the degree of that overlapping is minor; that by careful co-operation with the broadcasters radio's effect can be made highly favorable. Co-operation with the broadcasters, in the mind of the Columbia executives, takes the form of releasing their artists for broadcasting purposes.

"Of course," continued Mr. Yerkes,



Al Jolson, who makes thousands laugh nightly in the theater and hundreds of thousands in their homes by phonograph, is free to amuse you by radio, too. Columbia says so

COLUMBIA

"We have urged our artists to sing for the radio whenever possible, and have even made arrangements for them to do so in certain cases. You can take the Columbia catalogue and go through it and you will find that nearly all the big names in it have been heard by radio."

The only detrimental effect of radio, in the Columbia opinion, is its absorption of money that the public might spend in other directions—against which the automobile people, the dressmakers, the travel bureaus and similar purveyors of luxuries may complain as well as the phonograph industry.

"radio has a certain detrimental effect upon the talking machine industry, just as has any other newcomer in the luxury field. Most people have just a certain amount of money available for the purchase of such things as talking machines, automobiles, fashionable clothes, theatre tickets, travel and such luxuries or entertainment features. Any new luxury that comes up and attracts a large public interest naturally takes to itself part of the money that previously went into other industries. The automobile industry, for instance, when it came along took a lot of money from other people, and I believe that a great deal of the criticism of the automobile industry a few years ago was due to that fact.

"Now, radio has come along and I suppose that in some cases it may be absorbing surplus cash from homes that otherwise might devote it to the purchase of phonographs or records, but we are not the only people that radio has hit in that way. I suppose the automobile people and the theatre people and in fact anybody making or selling luxuries or semi-necessities, might object to radio on just that account.

"Personally I think that radio is a very good thing to come into the phonograph industry to the extent to which it does. It is a fact that the more competitors there are in any one industry, the better it is for that business. When there is only one company, having a monopoly, it cannot possibly create the public stir about the whole proposition that a number of companies can do, each doing its best to sell its product. The more phonograph companies have come into the field, the more people have learned the phonograph is something that they



Nora Bayes, the popular comedienne, makes records exclusively for the Columbia, and so she is able to broadcast at will

ought to have. I think radio, in that sense, by forcing a great deal of public attention upon music, is certainly doing the phonograph industry a good turn."

Chamlee and Homer Heard

ON May 10 both Louise Homer, exclusive Victor singer, and Mario Chamlee, Brunswick star, were heard by radio. They each sang several songs during the 27th Anniversary celebration of the Volunteers of America, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York City. The entire program was broadcast simultaneously by WJZ on 360 meters and WEAJ on 400 meters, both stations including the selections by Homer and Chamlee.

Neither of these artists were paid for their songs, which they gave freely in a good cause, as an act of charity. Neither made any arrangements in regard to broadcasting. Mme. Homer has consistently refused to discuss radio with representatives of THE WIRELESS AGE, but her secretary stated that if her voice was broadcast it was without her knowledge. Precisely the same thing occurred during Easter week, when Mme. Homer sang at noonday services in one of the New York theaters, which services were broadcast, including Homer's songs.

Chamlee's manager likewise stated that no arrangements had been made in regard to broadcasting.

IN REVIEW

Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States, Guy Marco, Editor; Frank Andrews, Contributing Editor.

One can just imagine the reactions Guy Marco received over a decade ago when he first began announcing he was going to put together an encyclopedia on recorded sound! ("Are you nuts?" "Oh, yes...um, splendid weather we're having, isn't it?" "Lotsa luck, pal!" - or the ones who said nothing, but just slowly backed away). As crazy an undertaking as it might sound, Marco persevered. He lined up an advisory board to help steer him in the right directions; he enlisted over two dozen specialists to write entries in their particular fields; and he spent nearly ten years organizing and co-ordinating the whole project. What we now have is an amazing accomplishment and a creditable job.

The encyclopedia itself is substantial, with over 950 pages. The guidelines limit entries to U.S. topics and to 1970 or earlier, though there are numerous instances where breaches in the perimeters are allowed. The entries are as diverse as the field itself, ranging from recording artists to obscure record labels to inventors to corporations to periodicals. A hit-or-miss sampling of entries resulted in the following varied list:

Bernard, Al	Opera Recordings
Cylinder	Pits
Disc	Reproducing Piano Rolls
Eastern Talking Machine Co.	Rolling Stones
Friedman, Ignaz	Schweinfest, George
Horowitz, Vladimir	Speeds
Link Piano Co.	Timbre
Mathis, Johnny	Woodwind Recordings
Muzio, Claudia	Ziv Co.

Much of the material for the work was distilled from existing published works, such as Jim Walsh's "Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists" columns in Hobbies, or technical articles from audiophile publications. However, there is much new material published here for the first time, such as Bill Klinger's entries for Indestructible and U-S Everlasting; Swartz and Reinehr's article "Radio Program Recordings," etc.

Collectors of the earlier era will be pleased to find extensive entries on Columbia, Edison, Victor and Zonophone, as well as lesser-known companies. Many pioneers of the industry, including the Gaisberg brothers, Emile Berliner and Edward D. Easton, are also to be found. More recent topics, such as tape recording, digital recording, the Sony Corporation and compact discs are likewise included. Many entries conclude with a reference to a longer article for those wishing to dig further. The book winds up with an extensive bibliography and index, which combine to take over a hundred pages.

The major problem with a work of this nature is what to include and what to omit. Of course, if source material is not known, it's pretty difficult to come up with an entry at all. But I was surprised to see no separate entries for Ben Selvin and Nat Shilkret (both very influential forces at Columbia and Victor respectively in the latter 1920s), while the obscure and relatively insignificant Montauk Trio, who made one Edison Disc, rates six lines! Likewise, neither Bob Haring or Ed Kirkeby even appear in the index. Many independent labels of the 40s and 50s, such as Atomic, Royal Roost, WOR Feature, Joe Davis, not to mention the myriad of fly-by-night 45 RPM labels, are not to be found, while several British labels, with no appar-

ent U.S. connection, are given separate entries.

Overall, however, the Encyclopedia is a valuable asset and a veritable goldmine of useful reference material. Collectors not wishing to spend the \$125 retail price to obtain their own copy should encourage local institutions to acquire it for their reference library. The Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States is published by Garland Publishing, 717 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2500, New York, NY 10022.

Dance Bands, Big Band & Swing. Buyers-Sellers Reference Book and Price Guide for 78 RPM Records, by Alice Rogers.

Alice Rogers has recently updated and expanded her original 1986 work to over double its original size; the first notable difference is an easier to read format!

The book is sort of a combination of Docks and Rust, and it concentrates largely on the bands of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Records are listed alphabetically by artist, with a few house bands (such as Victor Military Band) thrown in. Mrs. Rogers adds several mini-biographies of the artists, and then breaks up the monotony of long lists by including many label and artist photos. Record listings include titles, issue numbers, price ranges, and years of release. It should be noted, however, that these are not always complete discographies, but rather are representative listings (Nat Shilkret and the Victor Orchestra, for example, have 34 records listed).

Mrs. Rogers wisely cautions the reader that prices shown are meant to be a guide to current retail sales...not the "bible." But, as with any decent price guide, the user can get a good indication of one record's worth relative to another. For example, the Ted Black Sunrise pressing of "I Knew You When/Without That Certain Thing" is rated at approximately ten times its exact same counterpart on Bluebird. A Columbia -D by Emil Coleman is always rated higher than an acoustic Vocalion. Waltzes are usually graded lower than fox trots, and so forth. Prices were determined by averaging the results of several auction and sales lists, and should not reflect what they would bring at flea markets, garage sales, or second hand stores.

Alice Rogers is an avid fan of the music she compiles, and she has added a long section about the encouraging state of dance bands in the 1990s. There are also a few interviews with bandleaders which were conducted by Rod Kershaw.

Dance Bands, Big Band & Swing is just over 400 pages (large-size format) and is published at \$34.95 by Jellyroll Productions, available at many bookstores or by calling 1-800-627-9218. However, Alice Rogers will autograph copies ordered directly from her at: Route 1, Box 146A, Deming, NM 88030 (add \$3.50 for shipping and handling).

* * *

Ron Dethlefsen has recently had a pair of rare Edison manuals reprinted. The first is a 12-page 1920 service booklet for the disc motor; it is printed on heavy coated stock and comes with an insert covering the improved governor of 1923. The reprint is \$3.95 postpaid, or two for \$6.00. The second reprint is an 8-page instruction booklet for the care and operation of the electric phonograph found in the 1928 C-2 radio-phonograph combination. This booklet is \$2.95 postpaid. Both come with additional notes written by Ron. They may be ordered directly from him at: 3605 Christmas Tree Lane, Bakersfield, CA 93306.

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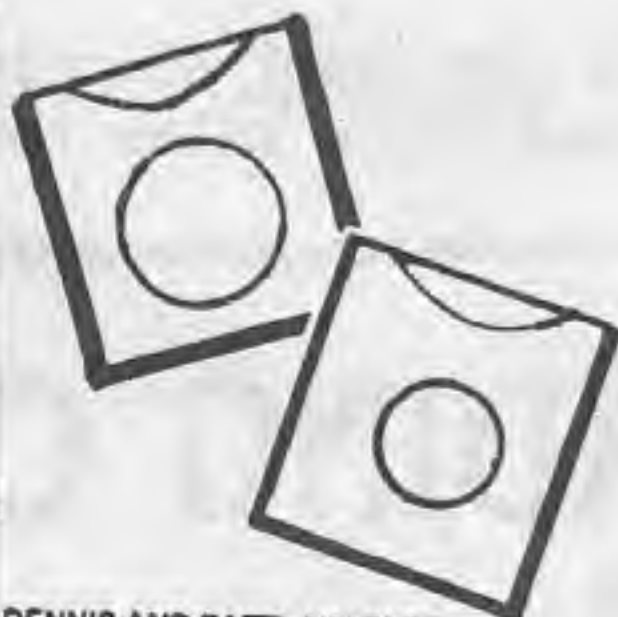
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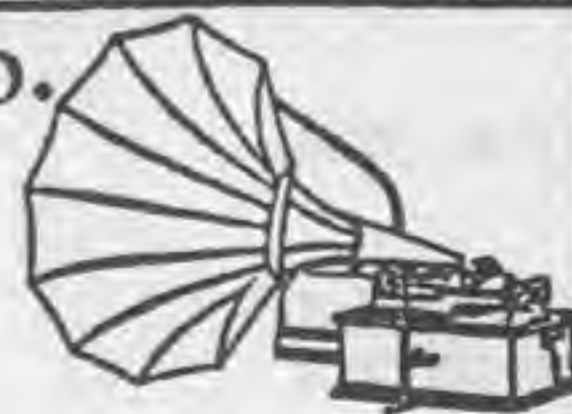
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CAPS meets on a regular basis, currently eight times a year between September and June, in Toronto and Oshawa, Ontario.

Membership in CAPS includes a subscription to the Society's newsletter, *Antique Phonograph News*, published 6 times a year. The newsletter publishes articles of interest to collectors, reports on the Society's meetings and auctions, notifies members of upcoming events of interest, and includes an advertising section. A membership directory is also published from time to time.

Annual dues are \$20.00 (outside Canada \$20.00 U.S.). Membership runs from September through August. Direct inquiries to: Bill Pratt, CAPS, 122 Major Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2L2 Canada.

Editor: Barry R. Ashpole, 377 Soudan Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4S 1W6. (416) 486-9669

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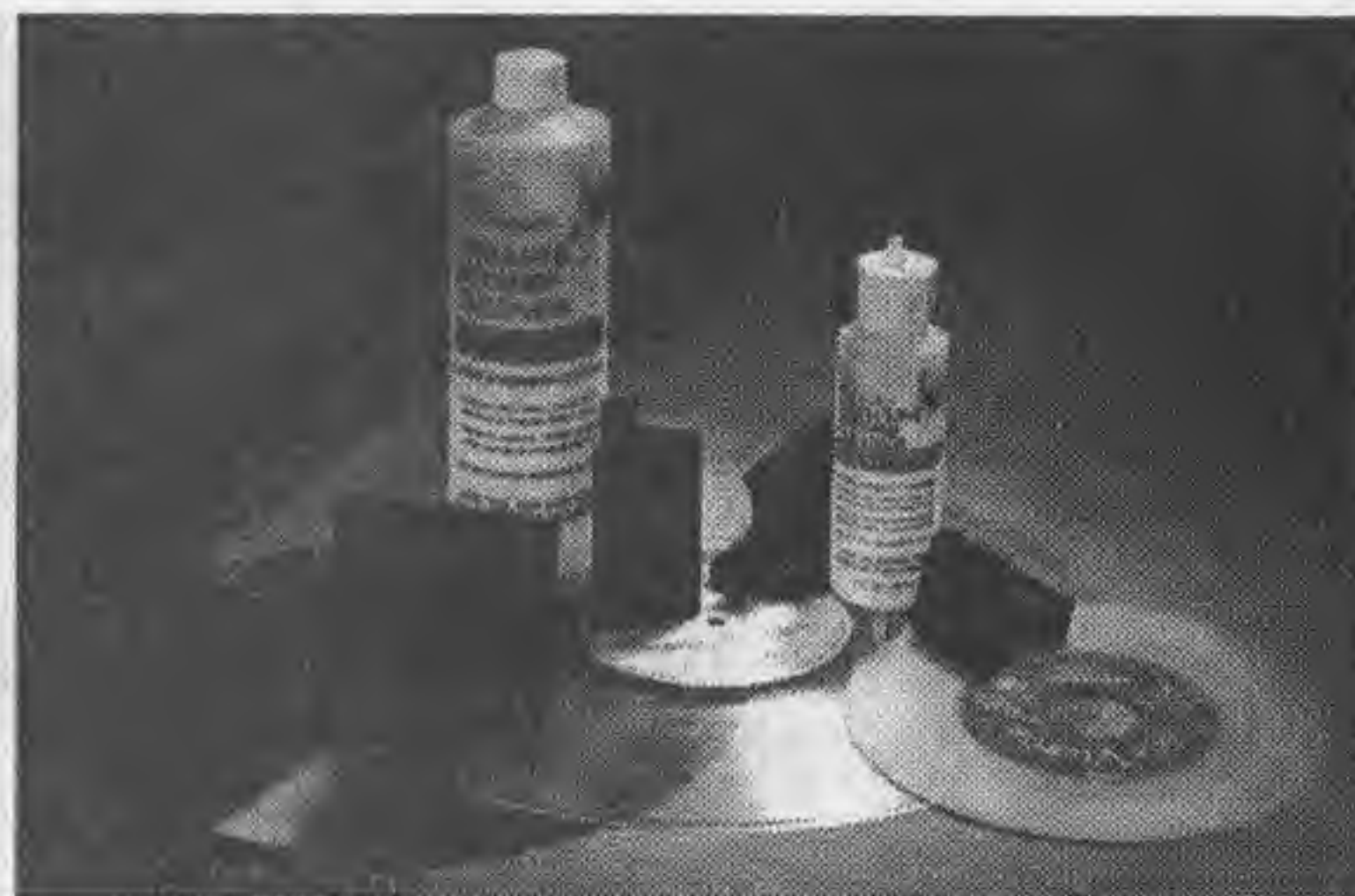
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- B - On the Wing Galop - VICTOR DANCE ORCHESTRA
- 16241-A - Dew Drops, Intermezzo - CHRIS CHAPMAN, ORCHESTRA BELLS
- B - Brother Noah Gave Out Checks for Rain - ARTHUR COLLINS
- 16246-A - Hiawatha - HARRY MACDONOUGH
- B - Anona - VICTOR ORCHESTRA
- 16265-A - My Hindoo Man - PETER LEWIS, XYLOPHONE WITH ORCHESTRA
- B - Blondy and Her Johnny - ADA JONES AND LEN SPENCER
- 16278-A - "Sleepy Sidney" Two-Step - SOUSA'S BAND
- B - Royal Brandenburg March - PRYOR'S BAND
- 16356-A - Ocean Breezes Waltz - PRYOR'S BAND
- B - Gavotte (from Paris and Helena) - VICTOR STRING QUARTET
- 16367-A - Drill Music No. 1 - PRYOR'S BAND
- B - Drill Music No. 2 - PRYOR'S BAND
- 16493-A - Happy Go Lucky Two-Step - PRYOR'S BAND
- B - Naila - PIETRO FROSINI, ACCORDION
- 16575-A - Manon (Ah! Fuyez-Douce Image!) - M. ROCCA
- B - Carmen Selections - PRYOR'S BAND
- 16629-A - "Vždy ku předu" pochod - HUBDA C.A.K. PĚŠHO PLUKU Č 102 L.FABINI
- B - Eugen Onegin (Aire Onegina) - BOHUMIL BENONI
- 16635-A - Maj, Piseň Od K. Bendla - OTOKAR MARAK
- B - Vecerní pisen "du vdovy" - BOHEMIAN BAND
- 16636-A - Cavalleria Rusticana - OTOKAR KARAK
- B - Dostaveničko (Gavotte) - CIS. A KRÁL. PĚŠHO PLUKU, JIRIHO, etc.
- 16638-A - Za tebe draga "hrvatska pisen" - HUBDA CIS. A KRÁL PĚŠHO, etc.
- B - Po starodánu, Polka Mazurka - HUBDA CIS. A KRÁL PĚŠHO, etc.
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